WYOMING
COMMUNITY COLLEGES
STRATEGIC PLAN

Wyoming Community College Commission Statewide Strategic Plan

Planning for the Future of Wyoming's Community Colleges









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Submitted by the Wyoming Community College Commission

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The Strategic Plan is submitted by the Wyoming Community College Commission and was guided by an Advisory Council representing the Commission, community colleges, business and industry, legislators, economic development, workforce development, education, and the public.

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Introduction



With the national spotlight on community colleges, Wyoming is poised to become a leader through its efforts to align the programs of its seven community colleges with defined state interests. As local economies become more globally focused and knowledge-based, community colleges are a critical way for learners to gain access to postsecondary education.

Recognizing the importance of these institutions, President Obama has appointed a community college chancellor as undersecretary of education and has moved community colleges to the forefront of his administration's higher education policy.

Wyoming community colleges are comprehensive. They offer students a high-quality education, and both students and the state benefit. The community colleges serve multiple missions and constituents, from high school students seeking college-level courses to adults needing basic literacy skills. As noted in the Wyoming Community College Commission's (WCCC) *Annual Report—2008* "There really is no 'typical' community college student" (WCCC n.d.-c, p. 3). Community colleges can mean the difference between a prospective student getting an affordable college education and one ending in debt that takes years to pay off or between a graduate entering a dead-end job and skilled employment capable of supporting a family. Community colleges are an essential feature of a state's workforce development system.

With a system that provides multiple modes of learning—traditional classrooms, distance education, program partnerships with business and industry, attendance at more than one college to accelerate or enhance a program—and then evaluates what works, Wyoming stands to expand access to postsecondary education and truly elevate the education of its citizenry. In fact, many who contributed to this plan identified advancing the education of its citizenry as the foremost state interest for community colleges to address.

Planning in a Time of Economic Scarcity

Recent Wyoming legislation, House Enrolled Act 121 (HEA 121), mandates the development of a strategic plan to create a statewide community college system to set priorities for state funding. The bill was conceived and written before the recent economic downturn, however, when state surpluses were large and expectations high that state funding might increase to permit program expansion and capital construction. Unfortunately, HEA 121 is being implemented during proposed budget cuts, so state resources are limited.

It can be argued, however, that at a time of economic scarcity, it becomes more urgent to establish a comprehensive statewide community college system—one that introduces efficiencies and cost-saving measures and yet continues to preserve program excellence, serve all students effectively, and create the programs necessary to strengthen the state's economy.

Pursuing Excellence in Wyoming's Community College System

This report offers a plan to strengthen Wyoming's statewide community college system. It is an ambitious but attainable goal. The plan underscores the importance of fostering communication between college leaders and the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC), the state's decision-making body. Although based on state interests, the plan incorporates the unique contributions of each college and recognizes the need to maintain its specific community focus.

We know that Wyoming's community colleges have been successful over the years, outperforming community colleges nationwide on a number of indicators, including graduation rates. When they complete their degree and certificate programs, Wyoming community college students are likely to find good jobs related to their field of study. We also know that Wyoming's economy has thrived on its extractions industries and that the state has the lowest unemployment rate in the

nation. At the same time, Wyoming has not been immune to the recent economic downturn and remains vulnerable to the "boom-and-bust" cycle of energy needs. Limited resources now require a new approach to maintaining the state's high level of postsecondary education.

A strong and flexible statewide community college system is pivotal to this effort. This Wyoming Community College Strategic Plan provides the framework for strengthening and supporting such a system. It provides the foundation for operational planning with policies that serve the state's interests, set goals, and define strategies for achieving those goals. The plan integrates the colleges by proposing common admissions and standard coursework. It also calls for an efficient use of resources by eliminating unnecessary redundancies, while recommending incentives to the colleges for developing innovative new programs that serve the state's interests.

Critical to the plan's success is breaking down the barriers between the colleges and the WCCC. Therefore, the plan specifies clear criteria for program approval by the WCCC and calls for adequate resources to fund those programs. Achieving an effective statewide community college system requires a long-term commitment from all constituents, including the WCCC, the colleges, the state, business and industry, and the public. With such a commitment, an integrated system can elevate Wyoming community colleges and position them as national leaders in community college education.

The Mission

The mission for the Wyoming system of community colleges represents the diverse services and opportunities that the colleges offer to their communities, individuals, and the state.

> *Wyoming community colleges provide dynamic lifelong learning environments through higher education, workforce development, innovative partnerships, and civic and global engagement that lead to responsible citizenship and economic, social, and cultural prosperity.*

The Strategic Plan Framework

A successful strategic plan is grounded in data and the meaningful involvement of all stakeholders in the process and its outcomes. This plan was conceived and rooted in data and information collected from the community college stakeholders and developed under the guidance of an Advisory Council representing multiple constituencies, including the colleges, legislators, other education sectors, the WCCC, business representatives, and the public.

State Interests and Strategic Objectives

The plan is framed by five state interests and built on eight strategic objectives, each of which falls within one or more state interests. Exhibit 1 illustrates the link between state interests and objectives.

STATE INTERESTS

Educated citizenry: Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering them access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs.

Diversified economy: Contribute to the diversification of Wyoming's economy by supporting the expansion of business and industry into new areas.

Workforce development: Respond to the needs of existing and emerging industries by providing a well-prepared and well-trained workforce.

Efficient and effective systems: Maximize return on investment by implementing system-wide efficiencies to enhance community college operations.

Accountability and improvement: Improve the educational success of Wyoming residents by measuring outcomes and responding to findings, whether negative or positive.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Student access and success: Promote student access to education and training programs and support students in achieving their educational and professional goals.

Quality programs: Offer quality, relevant programs that meet state and local needs.

Distance learning: Expand the role of distance learning in serving rural and hard-to-reach populations and in providing cost-saving access and educational services for students and colleges.

Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities: Align career and technical education programs with workforce development and labor market opportunities.

Partnerships: Support economic development through partnerships with local and statewide business and industry, government and education agencies, non-profit organizations, and community groups.

Coordination and collaboration: Improve system efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced communication and coordination.

Adequate resources: Provide adequate resources, given available funds, distributed in a way that promotes quality and positive student outcomes.

System of continuous improvement: Emphasize accountability and student success.

EXHIBIT 1. Strategic Objectives Support State Interests

	State interests				
Strategic objectives	Educated citizenry	Diversified economy	Workforce development	Efficient and effective systems	Accountability and improvement
Student access and success	⊙		⊙		
Quality programs	⊙			⊙	
Distance learning	⊙			⊙	
Alignment of programs and workforce opportunities	⊙	⊙	⊙		
Partnerships		⊙	⊙		
Coordination and collaboration				⊙	
Adequate resources				⊙	⊙
System of continuous improvement					⊙

The Details

The remainder of the report is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 describes the history and governance of Wyoming's community colleges. It reviews the legislation and statutes leading to the current bill (HEA 121), which mandates a strategic plan.

Chapter 2 profiles each of the seven community colleges and related outreach centers. This chapter presents analyses of enrollment and completion data and includes a discussion of how community colleges benefit both individuals and the public.

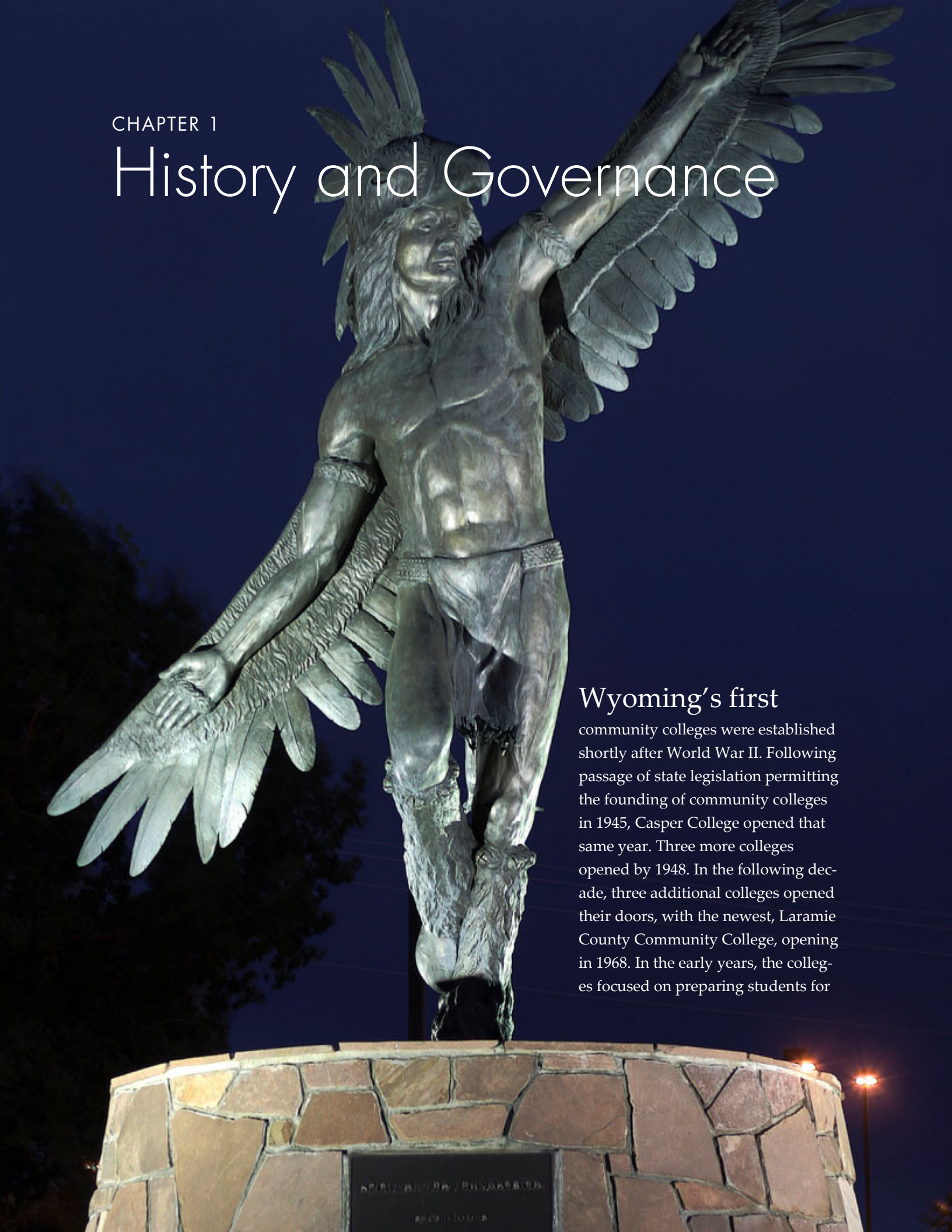
Chapter 3 examines economic and employment trends in Wyoming. It looks at future employment projections and identifies new, emerging industries that will need workers with education and training from the community colleges.

Chapter 4 lays out the details of the strategic plan. It discusses each strategic objective in terms of why it is important and how it will advance related state interests. The chapter includes recommended strategies and specific action steps for achieving the strategic objectives.

Chapter 5 outlines priorities for implementing the strategies and action steps detailed in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER 1

History and Governance



Wyoming's first

community colleges were established shortly after World War II. Following passage of state legislation permitting the founding of community colleges in 1945, Casper College opened that same year. Three more colleges opened by 1948. In the following decade, three additional colleges opened their doors, with the newest, Laramie County Community College, opening in 1968. In the early years, the colleges focused on preparing students for

transfer to a four-year college or university. Services expanded over time, and today each institution is a comprehensive community college, offering academic transfer, career and technical education, adult basic education, workforce training, and adult continuing education programs.

Each college has a home county district and, since the passage of the 1991 Secondary Education Omnibus Act, a service area encompassing from one to six counties. All seven community colleges have a main campus, and all but Casper College also maintain two or more outreach centers. Outreach centers generally include classroom space, have faculty and staff, and provide both credit and noncredit instruction to more remote communities.

The Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) was established in 1951 as an advisory council of 14 members (Fechter 1997). After restructuring by the Wyoming Legislature, most recently in 1985, the WCCC now consists of seven lay members and required representatives from statutory appointment districts, which are different from college district and service areas. The seven commissioners are appointed by the governor and approved by the Legislature for four-year terms, with a two-term limit. At least three but no more than four commissioners must reside in counties in which a community college is located, and no more than four can be from the same political party. The WCCC has a staff of 14 employees to carry out its coordination and policy guidance work.

Governance

Strengthening the Wyoming community college system must take into account several features of the state: a small population dispersed over a large geographic area, with considerable distances between communities, and well-established traditions of local control (Fechter 1997). The system must also integrate current college governance, which is achieved by seven-member local boards of elected trustees that govern their districts, and the WCCC, which addresses issues relevant to the entire community college system. Since Wyoming's community colleges were established, there has been a gradual shift from exclusive reliance on local boards to a combination of local control and state oversight.

During the past three decades, two reports on the WCCC and the community college system helped initiate changes in governance. In 1984, the Legislative Service Office conducted a review of the WCCC, and, in 1990, a private consulting firm conducted an independent management audit of the internal operation of the community colleges and the WCCC (MGT of America 1990). Following the recommendations of these reports, the Legislature enacted statutory changes in 1985 and 1991 that increased the WCCC's responsibilities and coordination role (Wyoming State Legislature's Management Audit Committee 1999).

A more recent report, *Community College Governance*, by the Wyoming State Legislature's Management Audit Committee (1999) analyzed longstanding issues regarding local and state control of the system. The report summarized the decision-making authority held by local boards of trustees, including setting graduation requirements, conferring degrees and certificates, collecting tuition and fees, and prescribing and enforcing rules for their own governance. These boards also determine funding priorities, manage funds and facilities, and raise additional funds by issuing revenue bonds for construction and levying additional mills, with voter approval.

Community College Statutes

THE 1991 SECONDARY EDUCATION OMNIBUS ACT

The 1991 Secondary Education Omnibus Act defined service areas for the community colleges, with the intention of increasing access in rural areas. These service areas include counties outside the seven counties in which a community college is located. The colleges provide off-campus instruction to these counties, primarily through outreach centers and increasingly through distance education courses. Out-of-district counties are not represented on college boards of trustees and are not assessed mill levies to support community college operations.

The Act also funded a statewide computer network to create a management information system for the colleges and make it possible to compare data among them. The Act further mandated the WCCC to coordinate the creation of a common course-numbering system for courses offered by the University of Wyoming and the community colleges.

HOUSE ENROLLED ACT 121 (FORMERLY HB 114)

In March 2009, the Wyoming Legislature passed House Enrolled Act 121 (HEA 121), which invested the WCCC with responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a statewide strategic plan for the community college system (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009). The Act specifies that decisions made by the WCCC regarding the formation of new programs, termination of programs, and priorities for capital construction must be in accordance with the state interests defined by the plan. The WCCC's annual reports are required to indicate progress toward achieving strategic plan priorities and to report on performance indicators specified by the strategic plan.

The WCCC is required to review, update, and modify the strategic plan biennially. The Act also placed new limits on special-purpose funding and required the WCCC to conduct an assessment of community college buildings and space requirements and develop a comprehensive plan to address long-term building needs.

CURRENT STATUTES

Under current statutes (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009), the WCCC has authority to make decisions affecting several aspects of community college operations:

Instruction. Approve and terminate instructional programs and provide oversight for program reviews carried out by the individual colleges.

Finances. Prepare and approve an annual system-wide budget for submission to the governor and Legislature, administer the funding formula, disburse state aid, and set tuition rates (with fees set by individual colleges).

Coordination. Develop and maintain a statewide strategic plan specifying the state's interests. Devise and implement the common course-numbering system and manage legislated fiscal support for the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium (WyDEC).

Data and Accountability. Establish and maintain a system-wide management information system, a statewide community college building database, and an assessment of community college building needs. Develop and maintain reporting guidelines for projecting enrollment growth and developing plans for long-range district building needs. Prepare reports for state agencies, the governor, and the Legislature.

Expansion. Set priorities and recommend capital construction projects annually and approve the creation of new college districts.

Community college boards are elected governing bodies charged by state statute under W.S. 21-18-304. Duties granted to the local community college boards by statute include establishing and enforcing rules and regulations for the government of each college, prescribing graduation requirements, initiating elections for bonds and mill levies, appointing the colleges' chief administrative officer, and managing college budgets and expenditures, among other tasks. Community college district boards have authority for all decisions regarding community college operations that are not specifically granted to the WCCC by statute (W.S. 21-18-202 (g)).

ADDITIONAL AGREEMENTS

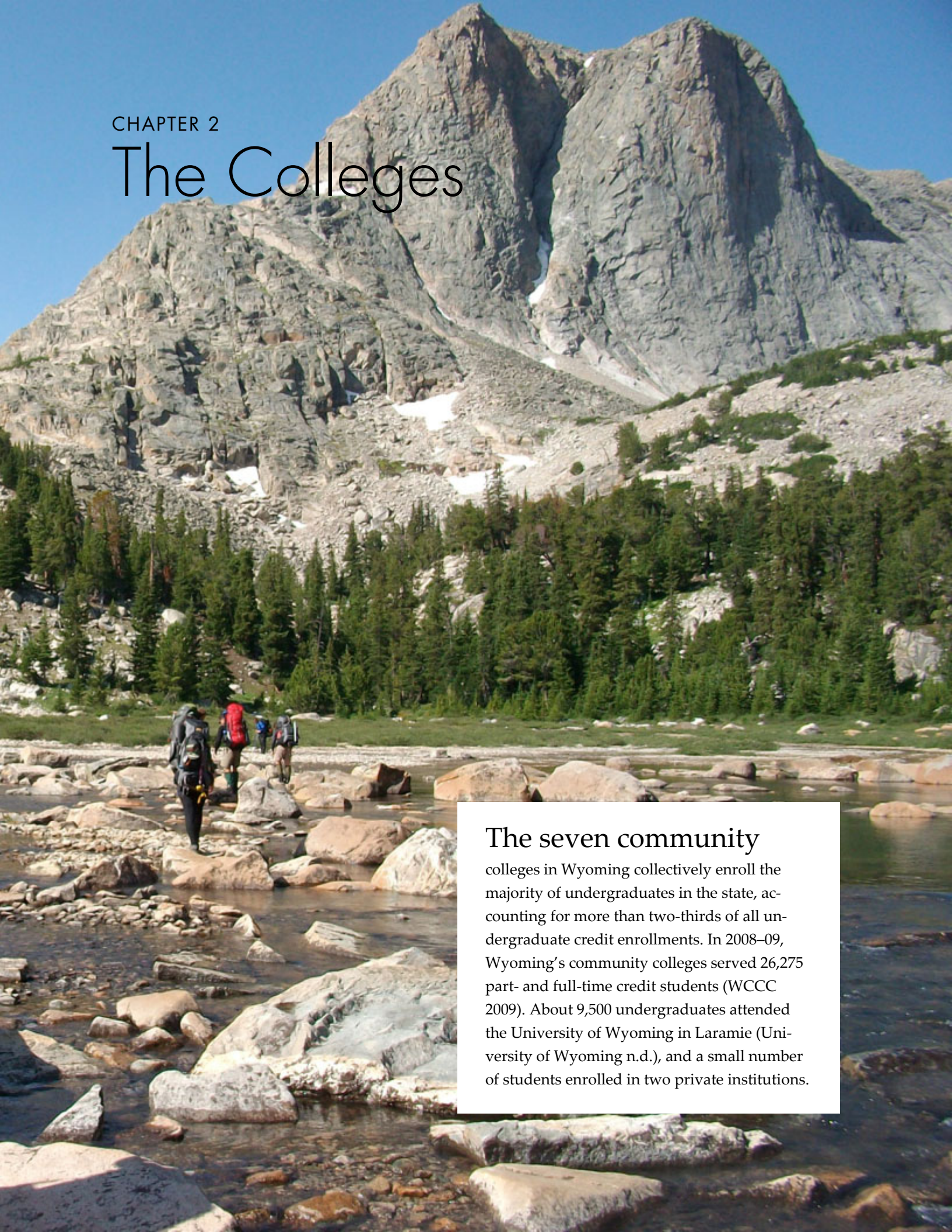
The Wyoming Community College Articulation Agreement was adopted in 2001 by the University of Wyoming and the seven community colleges. The agreement permits community college graduates to meet the university's lower-division general education requirements, without a course-by-course review, by completing the common general education core (a minimum of 30 credits) and an additional mathematics course (University of Wyoming 2001). The transfer of credits to fulfill specific program of study requirements is determined on a course-by-course basis by the individual university departments, using the Wyoming Higher Education Transfer Guide. There is no limit on the number of credits that community college graduates can transfer.

The Wyoming Community College Commission Policy on Consultation, adopted by the WCCC in 2008, in consultation with the colleges, outlines procedures for college administrators to advise the WCCC on the development of legislative requests, commission rules, and policy and practices. The stated purposes of the policy are to enhance the colleges' effectiveness, advise the WCCC in its statutory roles, improve communication and understanding between the Commission and the college districts, and create a structure for collaborative leadership to foster unity within the community college system (WCCC 2008c).

To meet these goals, the policy establishes four consultation councils (Academic Affairs Council, Student Services, Administrative Services, and Chief Information Officers) made up of community college officers and WCCC staff members. The four councils report to the Executive Council, consisting of the community college presidents and the executive director of the Commission. Two of the consultation committees, Academic Affairs and Student Services, are advised by a total of nine standing committees made up of community college and WCCC staff. The standing committees are ABE/GED, admissions, financial aid, institutional research, library, marketing, registration, workforce training, and the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium (WyDEC).

CHAPTER 2

The Colleges



The seven community

colleges in Wyoming collectively enroll the majority of undergraduates in the state, accounting for more than two-thirds of all undergraduate credit enrollments. In 2008–09, Wyoming's community colleges served 26,275 part- and full-time credit students (WCCC 2009). About 9,500 undergraduates attended the University of Wyoming in Laramie (University of Wyoming n.d.), and a small number of students enrolled in two private institutions.

The largest college, Laramie County Community College (LCCC), enrolled 5,970 students (3,939.9 full-time-equivalent or FTE[1]) in 2008–09, and the smallest college, Eastern Wyoming College, enrolled 1,712 students (1,109.7 FTE) (Exhibit 2). FTE enrollment increased by 20 percent from 1998–99 to 2008–09, and headcount increased by 26 percent (WCCC 2009). Exhibit 2 shows the 10-year percent change in credit FTE enrollment in Wyoming community colleges. Laramie County Community College experienced the highest increase, with its FTE enrollment growing by about 44 percent. FTE enrollment at four other colleges increased by about 4 to 21 percent. During the same period, however, Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD) and Western Wyoming Community College had the highest increases in headcount enrollments (about 49 and 59 percent, respectively) (WCCC 2009).

In 2008–09, women represented the majority of credit students enrolled in the state's community colleges, except at Northern Wyoming Community College District and Western Wyoming Community College (WCCC 2009). In terms of enrollment in academic and occupational programs, Northwest College had the highest proportion of students enrolled in academic programs (about 70 percent of enrollments), as well as the highest proportion of students attending full time (82 percent). Of all the colleges, Northern Wyoming Community College District had the highest proportion of students enrolled in occupational programs (46 percent).

EXHIBIT 2. Enrollment in Wyoming Community Colleges: 1998–99 and 2008–09

				2008–09		
College	1998–99 Annual enrollment (credit FTE)	2008–09 Annual enrollment (credit FTE)	Percent enrollment change, 1998 to 2009 (credit FTE)	Percent female enrollment (credit headcount)	Percent full-time attendance (credit FTE)	Percent enrolled in academic/ occupational programs (credit headcount)[1]
Casper	3,225.3	3,544.9	10%	60%	68%	43/18%
Central	1,342.5	1,562.9	16	62	62	36/20
Eastern	951.8	1,109.7	17	59	67	26/17
LCCC	2,729.2	3,939.9	44	61	61	34/23
NWCCD	1,800.2	2,183.1	21	42	60	20/46
Northwest	1,733.3	1,810.8	4	64	82	70/24
Western	1,892.5	2,243.8	19	43	57	31/12
State total	**13,674.8**	**16,395.2**	**20**	**54**	**65**	**35/24**

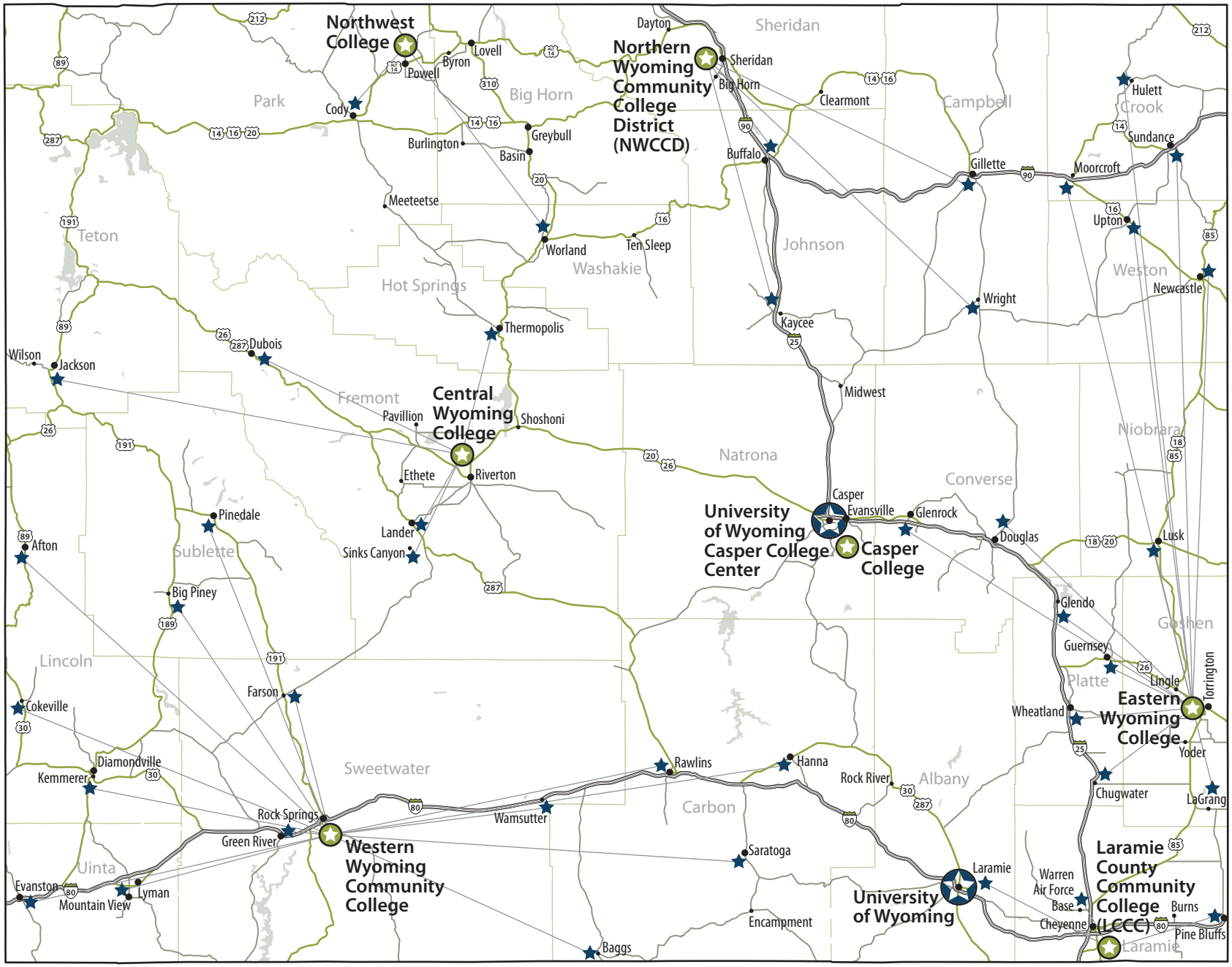
[1] Percentages do not total 100 because undecided students are not included.
NOTE: Enrollment counts and percentages include on-campus, distance education, auditing, compressed video, and telecourse students.
SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission (2009). Data included from this report are considered "draft" until approved by the Wyoming Community College Commission on October 29, 2009.

[1] Headcount refers to the total number of individual part-time and full-time students enrolled. One full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment is equivalent to 12-credit hours per term.

Community College Profiles

Each of Wyoming's community colleges provides comprehensive services, including academic degree and transfer, career and technical education, and adult basic education programs (including General Educational Development [GED] and English as a Second Language), as well as short-term workforce training and continuing education. While every college offers elements of all these program areas, the institutions also deliver unique programs and services to their individual communities and the state. Geography, economy, population, and educational attainment in local regions affect how the colleges operate and where they choose to target their particular services. The following section provides a brief profile of each college and highlights a few of the features that make each one unique. Refer to Exhibit 3 for a map of Wyoming's community colleges and outreach centers.

EXHIBIT 3. Wyoming's Community Colleges and Outreach Centers



Legend

- University
- College
- College Outreach Center
- City/town
- Interstate highway
- Highway
- Road
- County line
- Body of water

Universities

University of Wyoming: Laramie
University of Wyoming—Casper College Center: Casper

Colleges and Outreach Centers

Casper College: Casper

Central Wyoming College: Riverton
Outreach centers: Dubois, Jackson, Lander, Sinks Canyon, Thermopolis

Eastern Wyoming College: Torrington
Outreach centers: Chugwater, Douglas, Glendo, Glenrock, Guernsey, Hulett, LaGrange, Lusk, Moorcroft, Newcastle, Sundance, Upton, Wheatland

Laramie County Community College (LCCC): Cheyenne
Outreach centers: Laramie, Pine Bluffs, Warren Air Force Base

Northwest College: Powell
Outreach centers: Cody, Worland

Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD): Sheridan
Outreach centers: Buffalo, Gillette, Kaycee, Wright

Western Wyoming Community College: Rock Springs
Outreach centers: Afton, Baggs, Big Piney, Cokeville, Evanston, Farson, Green River, Hanna, Kemmerer, Mountain View/Lyman, Pinedale, Rawlins, Saratoga, Wamsutter



Casper College (founded 1945)

Casper College's mission focuses on student success and providing educational opportunities to improve the quality of life, sustainable community building, and citizenship. Its current goals focus on, among other areas, improving retention, graduation, and student success rates; recruiting, retaining, and developing highly qualified personnel; increasing diversity; maintaining a safe environment; maintaining and improving college facilities and equipment; enhancing the use of current pedagogies and technologies; encouraging excellence in advising and support services; and strengthening the role of the college as the cultural center of the region and as a resource for social, civic, and economic improvement (Casper College n.d.).

Casper College has a strong vision for its institutional planning and approved a Campus Master Plan in 2006 that guides fundraising and construction to support emerging programming needs (Casper College n.d.). Its sophisticated performing arts centers serve as a hub for the broader community, offering high-quality music, drama, dance, and other performing arts productions that are well-attended. The college's Tate Geological Museum serves the entire state through its facilities, resources, and outreach. The Casper College Western History Center maintains a collection of materials on Wyoming and the West, with a particular focus on Casper and Natrona Counties.[2]

About 6.5 percent of service area residents take classes for credit, compared with a national average of about 4 percent (Casper College n.d.). Many college instructors hold Ph.D.s, have extensive experience in their field, and dedicate their time to this one campus rather than serving as adjunct professors.[3]

Central Wyoming College (founded 1966)

Central Wyoming College (CWC) serves a diverse population at its main Riverton campus, five outreach centers, and the state penitentiary in Rawlins. The college's service area covers more than 15,000 square miles and over 60,000 people in Fremont, Hot Springs, and Teton Counties.



The three counties in CWC's service area represent the extremes of the Wyoming demographic spectrum. Teton County is one of the richest counties in the United States, with high income levels, high property values, and high educational attainment levels. By contrast, areas of Fremont County have the lowest educational attainment levels and highest poverty levels in Wyoming.

[2] From information provided in campus interviews and focus groups during a site visit to Casper College (April 14, 2009).
[3] From information provided in campus interviews and focus groups during a site visit to Casper College (April 14, 2009).

The college's service area encompasses the Wind River Indian Reservation, which is home to both the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone nations and incorporates one of the largest American Indian populations in the United States. Nearly 14 percent of the college's students are Native American, living on or near the Wind River Reservation (WCCC 2008d). In fall 2010, the college will open its Intertribal Education and Community Center, which will coordinate services offered to the two Native American tribes and educate the community about tribal heritage and customs (University of Wyoming Foundation 2008). Central Wyoming College offers over 40 academic and vocational programs on campus and through distance learning and is also home to the Wyoming Public Broadcasting Service (WPBS).

CWC's strategic plan focuses on key issues facing the college that are "timely and urgent and on which the college must make decisions about a particular direction the college must take" (Central Wyoming College 2008, p. 2). The strategic plan is founded on CWC's mission: "to enhance the quality of life through innovation and excellence in education." In its 2008–09 strategic plan, CWC identified four priorities: learning/collegiate engagement, growth/enrollment management, facilities, and community engagement.

Eastern Wyoming College (founded 1948)

"Choose your path" is the invitation issued by Eastern Wyoming College to its prospective students (Eastern Wyoming College n.d.). That path may lead, for example, to a veterinary technology program or an honors program in interdisciplinary studies. The college also offers programs in cosmetology and welding leading to associate in applied science degrees and industry certificates. Unique in the state, the welding program boasts a Mobile Welding Lab that can provide instruction for a company anywhere in the state and increase the productivity and skills of workers in the welding and joining field. The college's strong program in criminal justice responds to the needs of three correctional facilities in the area. Three of Eastern's programs offer online degrees, and because of its large service area (six counties) and the distances involved, the college also supports many distance learning courses.



The mission of Eastern Wyoming College—to be "…a student-centered, comprehensive community college that responds to the educational, cultural, social, and economic needs of its communities with quality, affordable educational opportunities for dynamic lifelong learning"(Eastern Wyoming College 2008a)—is reflected in its range of offerings and commitment to a friendly, supportive, small-school atmosphere that allows students to thrive and build self-confidence. The college's efforts at continuous improvement are evident in the strategic planning process initiated in January 2008. Focus group meetings involved students, employees, administrators, community members, and Board of Trustees and Foundation members in opportunities to "dream and discover." Through this process, the college identified five strategic directions: preparation for changing and dynamic times; promotion of quality, accessible learning experiences aligned with current and future opportunities; investment in technology; enhancement of quality of life for those in the region; and extension of global reach (Eastern Wyoming College 2008b).

Laramie County Community College (founded 1968)

Laramie County Community College (LCCC) was founded "to help fill the need for academic, technical and community service/continuing education in the county" (Laramie County Community College 2008, p. 1). Today, LCCC services are offered at its main Cheyenne campus and two outreach campuses, which serve more than 5,000 students annually and offer more than 90 educational programs. The main campus is located near both the Colorado and Nebraska borders and attracts students from throughout the state and region.



LCCC has a thriving workforce training system, serving many local businesses and industries. The college's new wind energy program is one of only a few such programs in the nation and is a recognized leader in wind energy technology and teaching.

According to its mission, "Laramie County Community College is a dynamic learning center that promotes social and economic prosperity for the individual and the community" (Laramie County Community College 2007). At the time of this publication, LCCC is developing its 2009–2012 strategic plan, which is founded on the college's mission as well as the core values identified by the college community as a whole. Those core values include educational excellence, integrity, respect, and community (Laramie County Community College 2007).

Northern Wyoming Community College District (founded 1948)

In additional to academic and vocational programs, Sheridan College, the main campus of the Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD), is known for its arts and cultural programs. The campus hosts the Big West Arts Festival each summer, and a Big West Academic Center is planned for the future. Sheridan College is also home to the Wyoming Culinary Institute, which operates a popular restaurant. The district also has established transfer agreements for distance learning with several universities, allowing students to earn master's and even doctoral degrees through the college.



NWCCD has the largest outreach center in the state in Gillette College, which has expanded rapidly in the last decade to meet the needs of fast-growing Campbell County. Community and local business support have been vital components of the college's growth. The main Gillette College building opened in 2003, student housing for 100 recently opened on campus, and a Technical Education Center is currently under construction. Another outreach center is located in Johnson County.

NWCCD is guided by six strategies based on the unique strengths of the college and the region. These strategies emphasize a commitment to increase diversity and contribute to the cultural life

of the region; bring baccalaureate opportunities to the region though transfer programs; involve faculty as institutional leaders; provide workforce development for local industry and businesses; encourage student engagement and support learners to set and reach personal goals; and promote continuous quality improvement (Northern Wyoming Community College District n.d.).

Northwest College (founded 1946)

Northwest College, located in the city of Powell in the northwest corner of Wyoming, was originally established as a branch of the University of Wyoming in 1946. In 1950, the college became an independent institution. Northwest College now serves nearly 2,000 students annually through its



main campus and four outreach centers.

The college's mission states: "Through exceptional, dynamic living and learning environments, Northwest College dedicates itself to individual student achievement, diversity, global citizenship, and community vitality" (Northwest College 2009). The college's vision reflects a similar commitment to a vibrant learning community and student achievement: "Through a superior teaching, learning, and living environment, Northwest College will be a dynamic and distinguished educational leader that shapes a positive future for students and the many communities it serves" (Northwest College 2009). Northwest College's strategic plan currently identifies several strategic priorities: student access, student achievement, institutional vitality, communication and image, partnerships, and support.

While strongly emphasizing the comprehensive nature of its offerings, Northwest College is known for several exceptional programs, including photography, music, biology, communications, journalism, and equine studies. Through its Humanities division, the college has developed a strong international student exchange program, allowing Northwest students to study abroad and foreign students to come to Powell.

Western Wyoming Community College (founded 1959)

Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC), located in the high desert of southwest Wyoming, has the largest service area, encompassing just under 30,000 square miles, of all the community colleges. The college supports more than a dozen outreach centers and offers an extensive distance education program. In addition to strong academic and transfer programs, the college is well-known for its state-of-the-art technology and industry programs. Many of these programs were developed with the support of local mining and gas and oil companies, and they include a training well site and diesel engine repair shop located on campus.

Other program highlights include a popular musical theatre program that presents several productions



each year and archeological and geological research programs with research projects in the surrounding area. The campus is known for its natural history museum and fossil displays, which attract visitors from the local schools and community.

WWCC is currently revising its strategic plan. The college has established six guiding principles linked to a set of goals and objectives for its work (Western Wyoming Community College 2008):

Learning is our purpose.

Students are our focus.

Employees are our most important resource.

The community is our partner.

Adapting to change defines our future.

Ethical standards guide our actions.

Tuition and Fees at Wyoming Community Colleges

For the 2008–09 academic year, full-time tuition and fees averaged $2,017 for residents and $5,137 for non-residents at Wyoming community colleges, and $2,505 for residents and $6,528 for non-residents in the Western region (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education 2008). In 2009–10, tuition at all of Wyoming's community colleges is $816 per semester for residents and $2,448 for non-residents for full-time attendance (12 to 20 credit hours), or $68 for Wyoming residents and $204 for non-residents per credit-hour. Although tuition costs are set by the WCCC and are the same at all colleges, fees are set by the individual colleges and vary among the institutions (Exhibit 4). For example, Western Wyoming Community College charges $181 in fees per semester for full-time students and Laramie County Community College charges $420.

EXHIBIT 4. Tuition and Fees at Wyoming Community Colleges: 2009–10

	Fees				Tuition and fees			
	Credit hour		Full-time per semester		Credit hour		Full-time per semester	
College	Wyoming residents	Non-residents	Wyoming residents	Non-residents	Wyoming residents	Non-residents	Wyoming residents	Non-residents
Casper	$9	$9	$108	$108	$77	$213	$924	$2,556
Central	21	21	252	252	89	225	1,068	2,700
Eastern[1]	16/8	16/8	256/128	256/128	84/76	220/212	1,072/944	2,704/2,576
LCCC	35	35	420	420	103	239	1,236	2,868
NWCCD (Johnson County)	15	15	180	180	83	219	996	2,628
NWCCD (Sheridan and Campbell Counties)	23	23	276	276	91	227	1,092	2,724
Northwest	21	21	256	256	89	225	1,072	2,704
Western	16	16	181	181	84	220	997	2,629

[1] When two amounts appear in the same column for Eastern, the first number represents the amount for on-campus students and the second represents the amount for off-campus students. Fees for full-time attendance are for taking 16 or more credits.
NOTE: Data are for the 2009–10 school year; they reflect a tuition rate of $816 (in-state) and $2,448 (out-of-state) per semester for full-time attendance (12 credits) and $68 (in-state) and $204 (out-of-state) per credit-hour for part-time attendance. Tuition costs for students from states participating in the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WEU) and Nebraska are 150 percent of in-state tuition. (Fees are shown in the first section of the exhibit.) See http://weu.wiche.edu for a list of WEU states.
SOURCE: Wyoming community colleges websites (for complete URLs, see References).

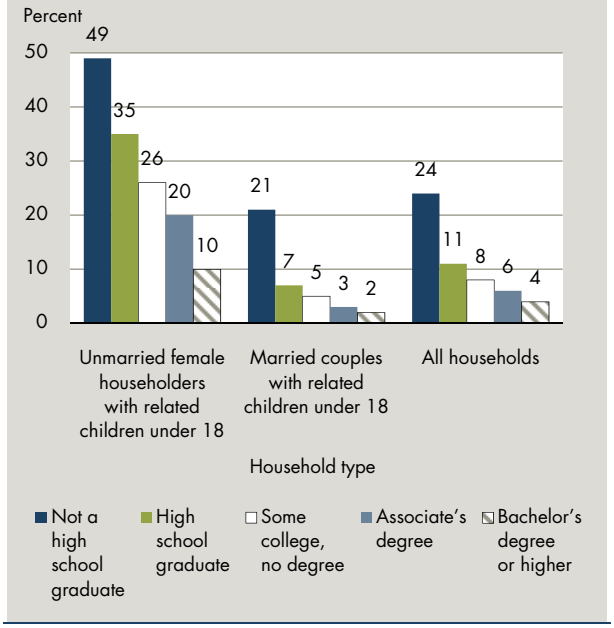
Benefits of Community Colleges to Individuals and the Public

Higher education leads to significant benefits for those who invest the time and resources to pursue it. The benefits to an individual—and to the community and state wherein she or he resides—are well supported by research. The benefits that have been most commonly documented are tangible ones, such as the wage differential discussed below. The less tangible benefits, however, should be recognized as ones that community colleges—like all educational institutions—can provide for an individual. Raising one's educational level brings personal satisfaction and enhanced life experiences that cannot be easily quantified. Other benefits, such as increased civic participation are less easily translated into terms that allow them to be compared with the costs of the investment. Those benefits are, however—along with the more tangible ones discussed below—ones that we cannot ignore when working to improve an educational system.

Studies have demonstrated wage increases of 20 to 30 percent for those with an associate's degree compared with those with a high school diploma. Both men and women and all racial/ethnic groups receive higher earnings as a result of postsecondary education (Boswell and Wilson 2004). An economic impact study done for Casper College found that a person with an associate's degree has an average annual income that is 38 percent higher than if he or she does not attend college. Even those holding a one-year certificate earn, on average, 17 percent more annually than high school graduates (Robison and Christophersen 2008). A study done for Oklahoma's 14 community college districts found that the more education a person completes, the higher that person's earnings. Compared with high school graduates, those with a one-year certificate earn $3,485 more per year, and those with a two-year associate's degree earn $4,441 more per year (Robison and Christophersen 2003). Similarly, a study for Iowa's community colleges found that, compared with high school graduates, those holding a one-year certificate earn $5,300 more per year, and those with a two-year associate's degree earn $7,100 more per year (Siegelman and Otto 2003). Those with college degrees also are more likely to receive employer-provided health insurance and pension benefits and to be in better health (Baum and Ma 2007).

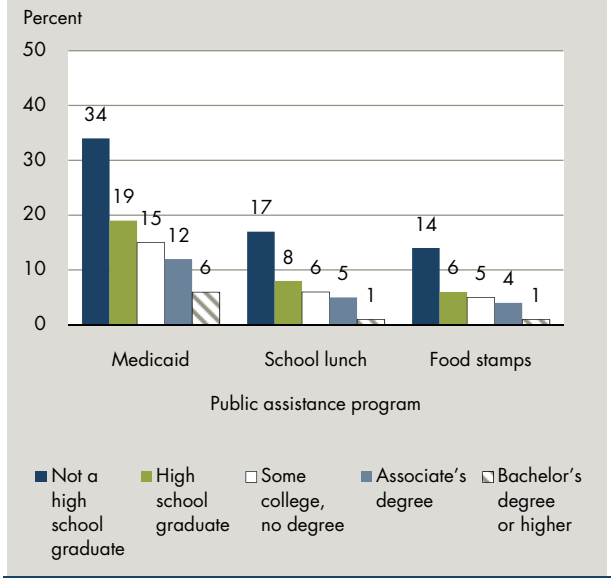
These gains for individuals also benefit states and taxpayers. National research has shown that those with higher levels of education are less likely to live in poverty (Exhibit 5) or to rely on public assistance programs (Exhibit 6), and they have lower smoking rates and healthier lifestyles in general (Baum and Ma 2007). In addition, reports detailing the savings in individual states indicate that states save money on social services when fewer people need them. For example, Oregon saves an esti-

EXHIBIT 5.
Percentage of Individuals Living in Households in Poverty, by Household Type and Education Level: 2005



NOTE: Data are for individuals age 25 and older.
SOURCE: Baum and Ma 2007, figure 1.11.

EXHIBIT 6.
Percentage of Individuals Living in Households That Participated in Public Assistance Programs, by Education Level: 2005

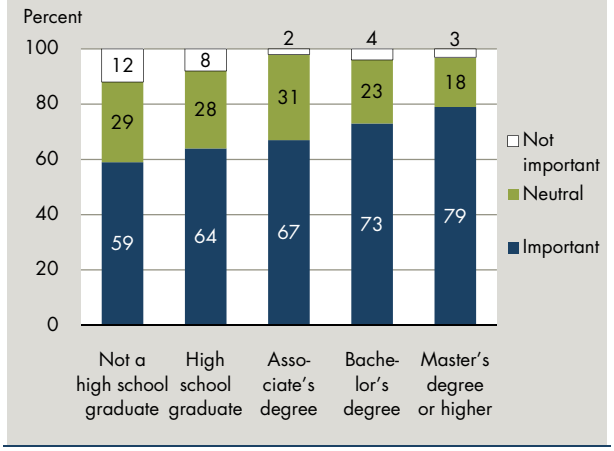


NOTE: Data are for individuals age 25 and older.
SOURCE: Baum and Ma 2007, figure 1.12.

mated $39 million annually (Robison and Christophersen 2006), and Washington saves $168 million annually (Robison and Christophersen 2003) in costs for welfare, unemployment, crime, and healthcare for each year that college-educated employees remain in the workforce. States have also shown that their taxpayers are making a wise investment and earning a high rate of return: Oregon taxpayers see a return of 19 percent on their annual investments in community colleges (Robison and Christophersen 2006), and Washington taxpayers, a 19.6 percent return (Robison and Christophersen 2003). In Wyoming, Casper College's economic impact study found that taxpayers receive a 9 percent rate of return on their annual investment and that the college contributes $24 million to the county's economy (Robison and Christophersen 2008).

Beyond these economic benefits, states gain in other ways. Individuals with more education have higher levels of civic participation, such as voting, volunteering, or giving blood. They are also more likely to be open to understanding the opinions of others (Exhibit 7). Communities benefit from the significant number of jobs offered by the community colleges, as well as their numerous cultural and educational events.

EXHIBIT 7.
Percentage of Individuals According to the Importance They Placed on Trying to Understand Opinions of Others, by Education Level: 2004

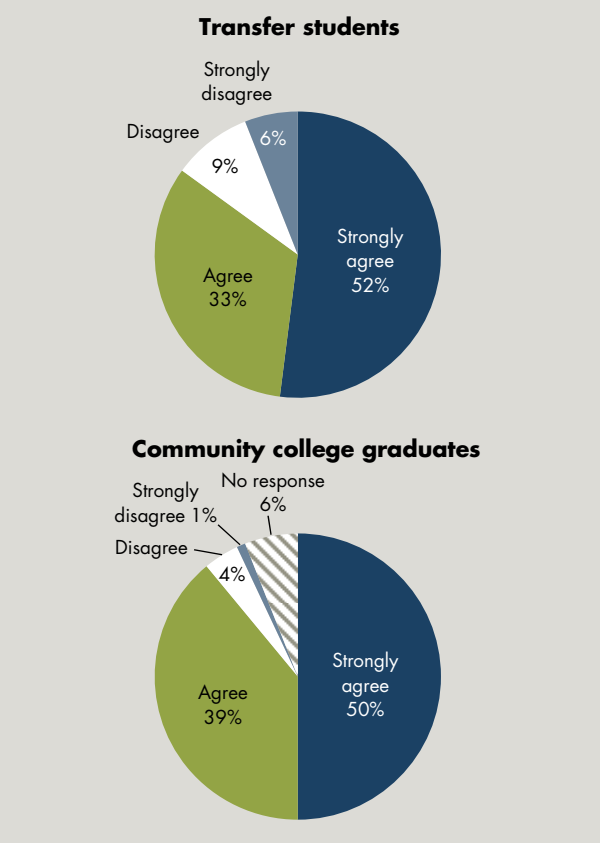


NOTE: Data are for individuals age 25 and older.
SOURCE: Baum and Ma 2007, figure 1.20.

A Performance Snapshot of Wyoming Community Colleges

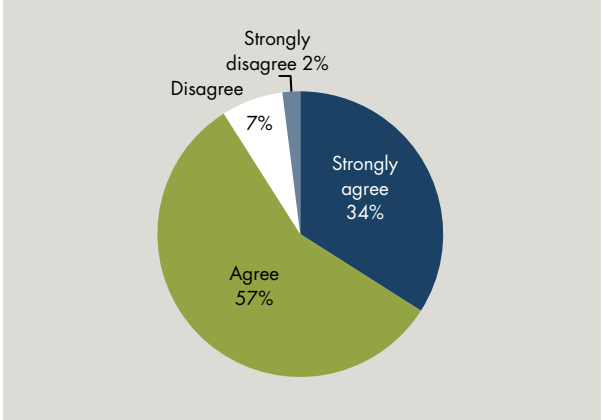
Wyoming community colleges offer students a high-quality education, and both students and the state reap the associated rewards. According to a 2006–07 annual performance report prepared by the WCCC (2008b), Wyoming community college transfer students and graduates responding to a survey were satisfied with their experiences at the colleges. Eighty-five percent of transfer students and 89 percent of graduates indicated that they had met their educational goals (Exhibit 8). Ninety-one percent of transfer students and graduates agreed or strongly agreed that their colleges prepared them well for further study at a four-year institution (Exhibit 9), and 88 percent of graduates

EXHIBIT 8.
Percentage of Transfer Students and Graduates According to Their Level of Agreement With "I accomplished my community college educational goals while at (this college)": 2004–05



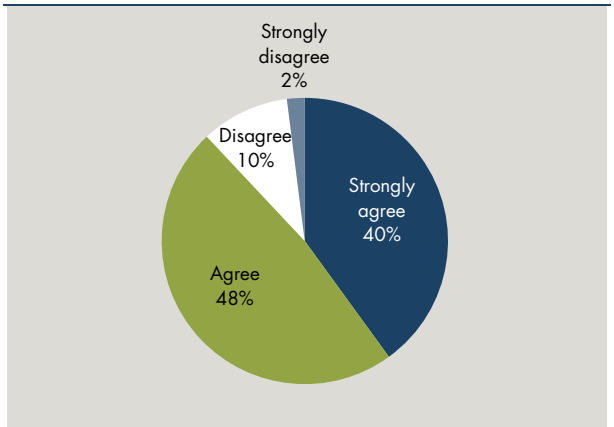
SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission (2008b), figures 1.1 and 1.2.

EXHIBIT 9.
Percentage of Transfer Students and Graduates According to Their Level of Agreement With "(This college) did an excellent job preparing me for further study at a four-year institution": 2004–05



SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission (2008b), figure 7.2.

EXHIBIT 10.
Percentage of Graduates According to Their Level of Agreement With "(This college) did an excellent job preparing me for full-time work in my chosen career or profession": 2004–05



SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission (2008b), figure 7.3.

felt they were well prepared for full-time work in their chosen career or profession (Exhibit 10). More than 90 percent of respondents reported satisfaction with the accessibility of instructors, class size, challenging coursework, and college facilities. Between 80 and 90 percent of students were mostly satisfied with the availability, scheduling, and variety of course; computer labs; the accessibility of instructors; and their overall academic experience (Exhibit 11).

Perhaps more importantly, Wyoming is doing well on several common success indicators for community college credit students, such as rates of enrollment, persistence, transfer, and completion for students pursuing degrees and certificates. According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), during the fall 2005 semester, 4.6 percent of the state's population age 14 or older enrolled in credit courses at the community colleges, compared with the national average of 2.6 percent. For stu-

EXHIBIT 11. Percentage of Transfer Students and Graduates According to Their Level of Satisfaction With "Please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the following aspects of (your college)": 2004–05

Aspect of community college being rated	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied/ No response	Total
Accessibility of Instructors	50	46	3	4	100
Availability of Courses	32	51	16	1	100
Challenge of Coursework	43	52	4	1	100
Class Size	59	38	2	1	100
Facilities	40	51	6	3	100
Overall Academic Experience	49	47	3	1	100
Scheduling of Courses	41	47	10	3	100
Variety of Courses	39	45	11	5	100

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: Wyoming Community College Commission (2008b), table A.2.

dent cohorts starting in 2001 through 2006, more than half of first-time, full-time students starting in the fall of one year were still enrolled the next fall. These persistence rates, which ranged from 53 to 57 percent, reflect the fact that some students arrive at the colleges intending to stay only one semester to update work skills or take enrichment courses. The national average rate is slightly lower. For the 2003–04 cohort, Wyoming's persistence rate was 54 percent, compared with the national average of 51 percent (WCCC n.d.-c). Average scores in Wyoming were slightly above the national average in writing, mathematics, reading, critical thinking, and scientific reasoning skills on the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency tests[4] (WCCC 2008b).

In Wyoming, rates for those completing an associate's degree within three years have increased in recent years. For example, from spring 2000 through spring 2006, Wyoming rates increased from 24 percent to 32 percent. These data are based on students in their first semester of college after receiving a high school diploma or GED who enrolled in a degree or certificate program and who had completed 12 credit hours or more. Some students intend to transfer to four-year institutions before earning a degree, and it has been suggested that some indicate a false intention to pursue a degree so that they can qualify for financial aid. Comparing the 2003–04 Wyoming cohort of students with the national average, 32 percent and 23 percent, respectively, of first-time, full-time community college students with intentions to attain a degree had done so three years later.[5]

[4] The Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency is typically administered at the end of the sophomore year to assess academic achievement in general education.

[5] National data calculated by MPR Associates are drawn from the NCES 2006 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) data.

Students who have participated in Wyoming community college programs appear to do well in both work and further education. Those who transfer to the University of Wyoming from the community colleges do as well as those who transferred from other institutions or started at the University. According to 2004–05 System Graduate Surveys, within six months to one year after graduating from community college with a degree or certificate, 83 percent of graduates were employed either full-time or part-time. Almost 90 percent said their jobs were related to their majors. On a scale of 1 to 10, with the highest indicating "very satisfied," employers rated graduates' work skills 8.4, and their work habits 8.5. Of those taking exams for certification in healthcare, cosmetology, veterinary services, and horsemanship, certification pass rates ranged from 83 to 100 percent between 2003–04 and 2006–07 (WCCC 2008b).

Another report from the Wyoming Department of Employment (2006) found that among 2002–03 graduates who were employed after leaving community college, 85 percent were working in Wyoming one year after graduation, indicating that the state was benefiting from its investment in these students. Graduates who were working had jobs in all industry sectors, with most working in healthcare (21 percent), retail trade (13 percent), educational services (12 percent), and leisure and hospitality (9 percent). Five percent held jobs in natural resources and mining, one of the state's most robust industries. Graduates working in healthcare were earning the highest average hourly wages.

The Education Pipeline

Researchers and educators often examine state data in terms of an education "pipeline"—tracking how many 9th-grade students eventually graduate from high school, enter college directly, and pursue a degree within a certain period of time. In Wyoming, for every 100 9th-graders, 75 graduate from high school (Exhibit 12). Of the 43 directly entering college, 27 enter a public two-year college. By the time they start their second year of college, 19 of those students are still enrolled, and, after three years, 16 have graduated. While Wyoming does better than the national average on all of these indicators, particularly in freshman persistence to a second year and graduates after three years, it lags states like Nebraska and South Dakota in proportion of high school graduates and proportion of graduates enrolling in postsecondary education immediately after high school.

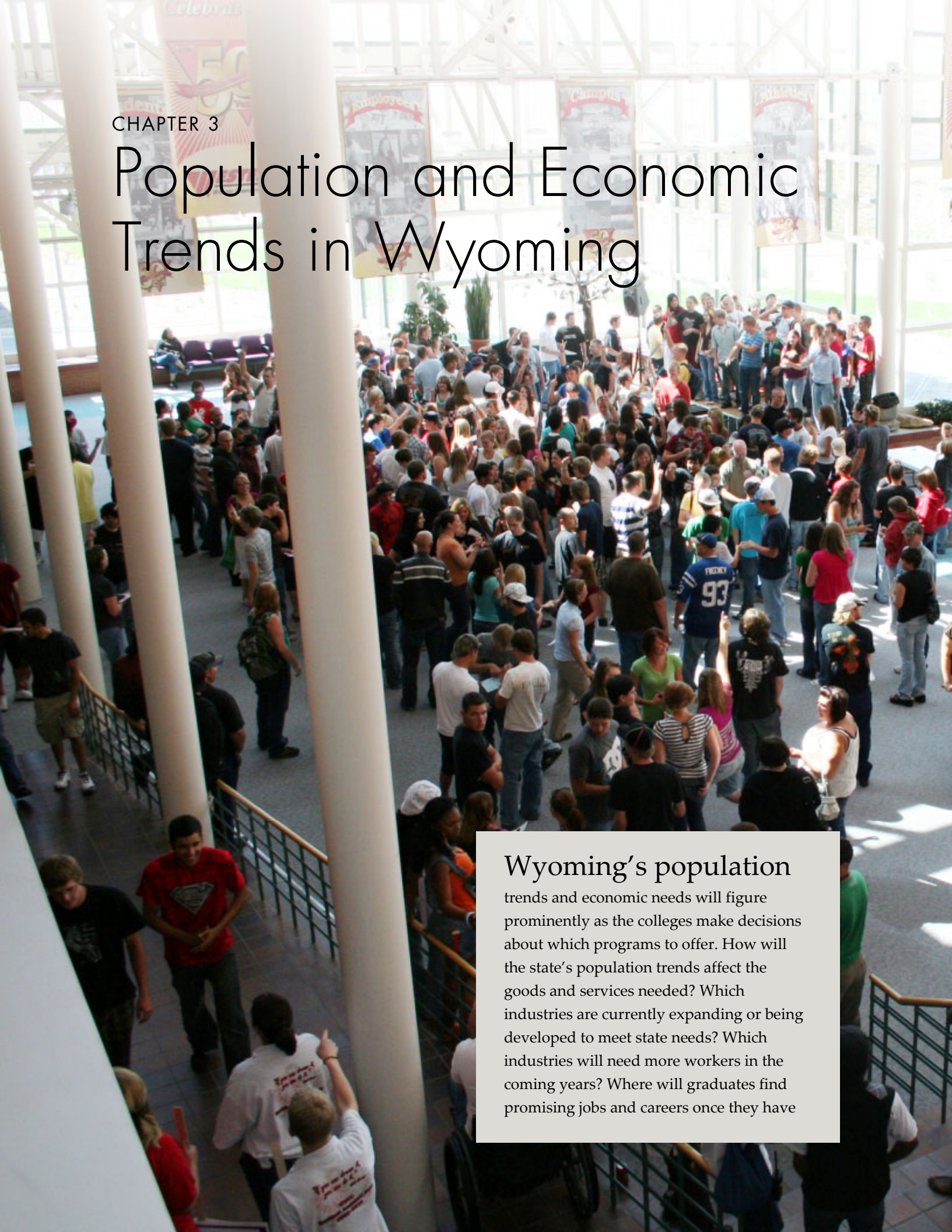
EXHIBIT 12. Pipeline of Students Entering 9th Grade and Graduating from Community College in Wyoming Compared With the United States and Other Western States: 2006

For every 100 9th-graders…	Number who graduate from high school four years later	Number who directly enter college	Number who enter a a two-year college	Number of freshmen at a two-year college returning in sophomore year	Number who graduate from a two-year college after three years	
United States	100	69	42	15	8	5
Wyoming	100	75	43	27	19	16
Colorado	100	70	44	11	6	4
Idaho	100	79	36	7	4	2
Montana	100	79	46	11	6	3
Nebraska	100	82	53	16	9	5
South Dakota	100	82	59	15	10	10
Utah	100	79	37	11	6	4
(Sources/Calculations)	—	CCD 2005–06	IPEDS 2006	IPEDS 2006	IPEDS 2006	IPEDS 2006

NOTE: "CCD" indicates these data come from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Common Core of Data, and "IPEDS" indicates these data come from the NCES 2006 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Residency and Migration, Fall Enrollment, and Graduation Rate surveys.
SOURCE: MPR Associates calculations, using Pipeline data from the National Center for Higher Education Management System Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Population and Economic Trends in Wyoming



Wyoming's population

trends and economic needs will figure prominently as the colleges make decisions about which programs to offer. How will the state's population trends affect the goods and services needed? Which industries are currently expanding or being developed to meet state needs? Which industries will need more workers in the coming years? Where will graduates find promising jobs and careers once they have

finished their college programs? Which programs should colleges offer to prepare both their students and industry for those changes?

A Small and Aging Population

With 532,668 residents in 2008, the state's population is smaller than many small cities, such as Colorado Springs (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Wyoming's population has increased by 17 percent since 1990 (Exhibit 13) and is projected to increase by .9 percent or approximately 4,500 per year. Since 2001, more people have moved to Wyoming than out of it as the state's economy has grown (Liu 2007).

EXHIBIT 13. Population Trends in Wyoming: 1990, 2000, and 2008

	1990	2000	2008
Population	453,588	493,782	532,668

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 Population Estimates, 1990 and 2000 Census.

The state's population, however, is rapidly aging, with a substantial segment of its skilled workforce set to retire soon (Exhibit 14). Wyoming's population is likely to be one of the oldest populations in the country in the future. It has one of the highest proportions of early baby boomers in the United States, as well as many young adults (ages 25–39) who have left the state to experience living elsewhere or for employment opportunities. Compared with other states, Wyoming has a small immigrant population. In other states, immigrants are a growing young adult population because they are typically workers or students coming to the United States without their parents. As for younger populations, the Generation X population (ages 27–43) is relatively small because many left the state as young adults in the 1980s and 1990s. Enrollment in kindergarten through 12th grade was 16 percent smaller in 2005 than in 1994 (Liu 2007).

The state's aging population likely will require different goods and services than the state currently offers—particularly healthcare services. This also means that the state will see a diminishing labor supply (Liu 2007).

Education Levels of Wyoming Citizens

In 2007, more than 90 percent of state residents over age 25 had earned a high school diploma, and nearly 58 percent had attended some college or earned an associate's degree. Those statistics are higher than the national proportions of 84 percent holding a high school diploma and 54 percent with some college or an associate's degree. Wyoming does not fare as well, however, with respect to those holding a bachelor's or higher degree: only

EXHIBIT 14. Estimates and Projections for Population by Age in Wyoming and the United States: 2006, 2011, and 2016

	Percentage of population in each age group					
	2006 (estimates)		2011 (projections)		2016 (projections)	
Age range	Wyoming	U.S.	Wyoming	U.S.	Wyoming	U.S.
0–17	23.8%	24.7%	22.2%	24.0%	21.8%	23.9%
18–24	10.4	9.7	8.5	9.8	7.4	9.1
25–64	53.6	53.1	55.0	53.0	53.4	52.1
65 and older	12.3	12.5	14.3	13.2	17.5	14.8

SOURCE: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (2009), table 1.

23 percent of adults age 25 and older hold a bachelor's or higher degree, compared with 27 percent nationally (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

A Strong but Changing Economy

Wyoming has enjoyed a strong economy over the past decade. From 2005 to 2007, growth was stronger than it had been in more than 10 years (Wen 2009). The state had a booming mineral extractions industry throughout the 1990s, and associated businesses, such as construction, also have thrived. Thousands of businesses have opened in recent years.

Even in the national economic downturn, Wyoming is generally well-situated compared with other states, with the lowest unemployment rate of all 50 states—4.8 percent in January 2009 (Bullard 2009b). No state, however, is immune to economic fluctuations. Wyoming's unemployment rose by approximately 1 percent from January 2008 to January 2009, affecting every county (Cowan 2009), and the state's job growth rate declined from 2006 to 2009 (Bullard 2009b).

Across the country, economic changes are affecting many areas—with large and decades-old companies restructuring or dissolving in various sectors. Continuing to diversify Wyoming's economy will help protect the state against unanticipated changes or the hazards of boom-and-bust cycles. As of March 2009, Wyoming employed 289,600 people (not including employment in agriculture). Six industries employed 73 percent of the total: government, leisure and hospitality, retail trade, natural resources and mining, education and health services, and construction (Wyoming Department of Employment 2009b).

Wyoming's community colleges have offered hundreds of degrees and certificates in those areas (WCCC n.d.-a), but keeping pace with new industries and technologies takes constant monitoring, because many factors affect whether or not certain industries will grow. For example, in 2006 and 2007, approximately 2,300 new Wyoming firms opened each year, with the largest proportion related to construction for oil and gas pipelines. In 2007, however, the number of new firms related to mining decreased after years of steady growth. Both jobs and wages in mining declined—all potentially related to the slowdown in gas and oil drilling resulting from lack of space in the pipelines, environmental restrictions, and permit issues (Bullard 2009a). Price changes for oil and gas and the development of new energy technologies also may affect the mining industry.

Long-term employment projections for Wyoming (Exhibit 15) predict at least 3 percent growth from 2006 to 2016 in professional and business services, construction, and transportation, warehousing, and utilities. With Wyoming's aging population, employment in healthcare fields also is predicted to increase significantly in the future. By 2015, the number of people age 65 and older in the state is projected to be more than double that of those ages 18–24 (Wyoming Department of Employment 2009a). And a well-documented nursing shortage continues. The net growth in demand for registered nurses is projected to be 29.2 percent (1,278 jobs) from 2006 to 2016. Jobs for nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants, positions requiring postsecondary training, are also projected to increase by 22 percent during that period.

Though each region of the state currently focuses on different industries, such as mining, agriculture, or tourism, all may see changes affecting future jobs. For example, the new supercomputer facility at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Cheyenne may draw other new businesses or talent to the area. Changes in how natural resources are used also may present new

opportunities. The potential for a new regional center focused on wind energy in Laramie, or a coal gasification plant in central Wyoming, may bring new jobs and expertise. As the state, workforce development offices, and community colleges monitor and anticipate these developments, their responses to changes can benefit both students and industry.

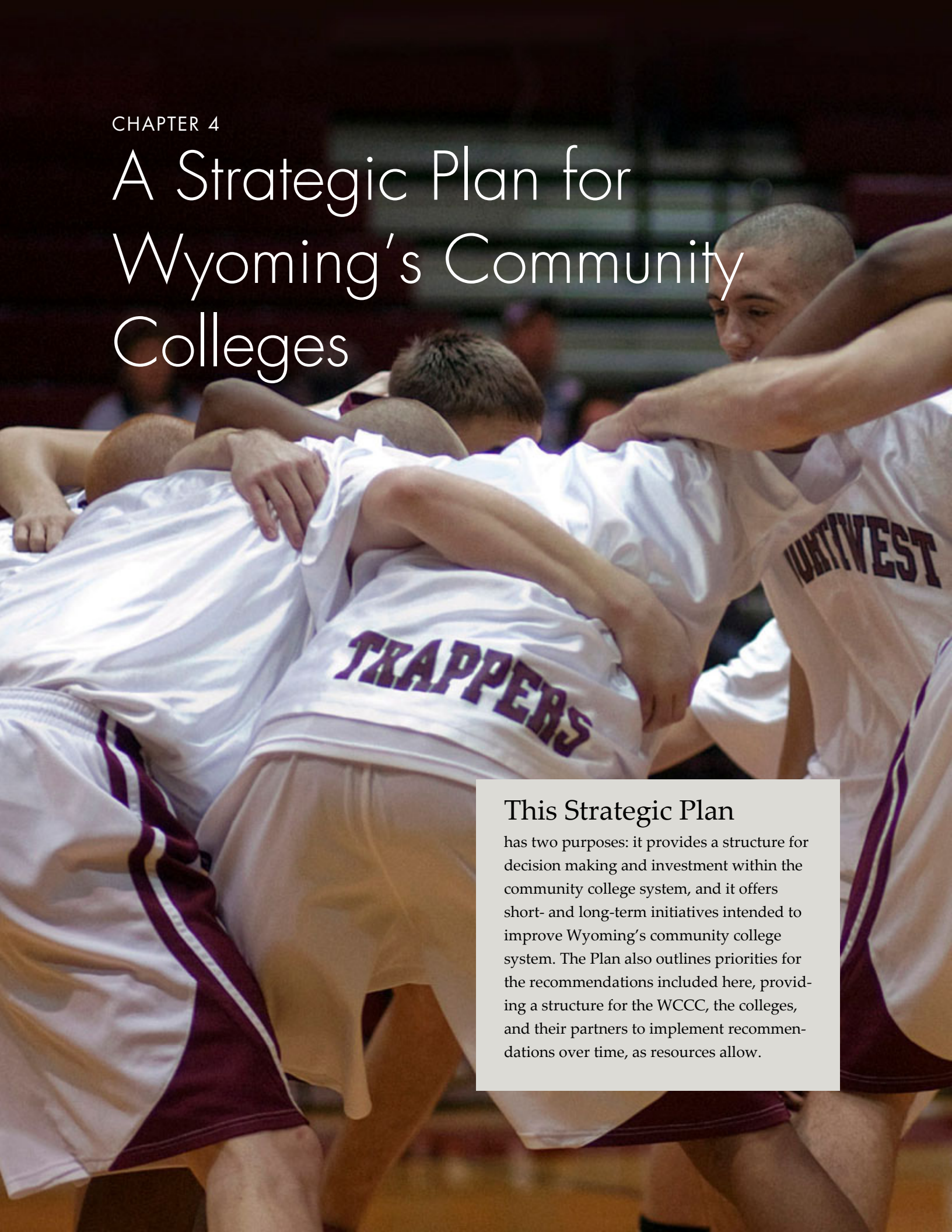
EXHIBIT 15. Long-Term Employment Projections for Wyoming: 2006–16

Industry	Actual employment 2006	Projected employment 2016	Change from 2006 to 2016	Percent change
Natural Resources and Mining	28,737	35,794	7,057	2.2%
Construction	24,011	32,433	8,422	3.1
Manufacturing	10,126	11,042	916	0.9
Wholesale Trade	8,292	10,366	2,074	2.3
Retail Trade	30,999	34,545	3,546	1.1
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	11,174	14,988	3,814	3.0
Information	4,711	5,021	310	0.6
Financial Activities	11,192	13,788	2,596	2.1
Professional and Business Services	17,449	24,837	7,388	3.6
Educational Services	25,079	28,926	3,847	1.4
Health Care and Social Assistance	28,971	36,800	7,829	2.4
Arts & Entertainment	3,917	4,808	891	2.1
Leisure and Hospitality	30,043	35,560	5,517	1.7
Other Services	8,556	10,288	1,732	1.9
Government (Including Postal Service)	23,603	25,256	1,653	0.7
Total—All Industries	**266,860**	**324,452**	**57,592**	**2.0**

SOURCE: Adapted from Bullard and Leonard (2008).

CHAPTER 4

A Strategic Plan for Wyoming's Community Colleges



This Strategic Plan

has two purposes: it provides a structure for decision making and investment within the community college system, and it offers short- and long-term initiatives intended to improve Wyoming's community college system. The Plan also outlines priorities for the recommendations included here, providing a structure for the WCCC, the colleges, and their partners to implement recommendations over time, as resources allow.

State Interests

The plan identifies five primary state interests that will drive investment in community college programs and services. These interests focus on what colleges can do to promote state goals, what structures and supports are needed to help Wyoming community colleges improve their services, and, most importantly, what Wyoming residents need to achieve their potential as productive, educated citizens.

The state interests were developed at the direction of the Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming (2009). The Legislature charged the WCCC with "establishing a statewide college system" that is aligned with the state's interests, ensures access to educational programs, and responds to the needs of students, employers, and the state's workforce (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009, Section 21-18-202). Section 4 of the legislation specifies that the state's interests must be "identified and incorporated" in the statewide strategic plan. The legislation clarifies that the primary role of the WCCC is to review programs and make decisions based on a consideration of state interests, so identifying these interests was a serious undertaking for this strategic plan.

Researchers synthesized information obtained through a review of relevant reports and literature, interviews with stakeholders, and recommendations from the Advisory Council. These state interests are statewide priorities that can be directly affected by the education and training services offered through the community colleges. Each of the five state interests listed below includes a description of how the community college system plans to address that particular state interest, as well as the kind of impact the system hopes to have.

The state interests address the multiple roles community colleges play in Wyoming: educators, economic drivers, community builders, and responsible stewards of public funds.

1. Educated citizenry

Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering them access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs.

Along with other state educational agencies, the seven community colleges contribute to increasing the educational attainment of Wyoming residents. Community colleges have a unique role, however, in that they provide comprehensive programs that are designed to meet a broad range of educational needs including short-term occupational training; preparation for an associate's degree or transfer to a four-year institution; acquisition of literacy, numeracy, and English language skills; and preparation for entering the workforce. No less important is the colleges' role in ensuring that Wyoming citizens obtain an education that helps them participate in their government and contribute to their communities and that enhances their quality of life. This particular state interest has, therefore, been identified as the foremost state interest that the community colleges should address.

Wyoming community colleges can assist the state in achieving higher rates of educational attainment by maintaining strong programs at every level. Through their adult basic education programs, they help adults with lower skills acquire the numeracy and literacy skills needed in their lives as well as the foundation needed for additional education. Through their workforce training programs, they help current workers gain specific skills needed for their jobs. And their academic and career technical education programs prepare students for further education and the workforce. By being comprehensive, community colleges are uniquely positioned to enhance the educational

attainment of a large proportion of Wyoming's citizens by providing access to a wide array of educational offerings. To do so, they must continually assess the educational needs of their community, and perhaps more importantly, develop improved indicators of an educated citizenry.

2. Diversified economy

Contribute to the diversification of Wyoming's economy by supporting the expansion of business and industry into new areas.

Community colleges can play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining new industries and businesses in their local communities and the state. Community colleges support local workforce training efforts and provide new employees with access to further education and cultural events, even in very rural areas of Wyoming.

The resources of higher education together with those of the corporate community and the state can be a powerful and attractive economic development engine in which community colleges play a key role. By serving as a full partner in economic development, more can be done for business and industry. Employers have always looked to colleges as a source of trained workers, including graduates of both career and technical and general education programs. However, the role of community colleges in economic development has expanded and now includes activities as diverse as management and technical assistance for new and small businesses, tech-prep programs with high schools, cooperative education programs, partnerships with states in economic development activities, and contract or customized training for industries.

3. Workforce development

Respond to the needs of existing and emerging industries by providing a well-prepared and well-trained workforce.

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to local and statewide industries and employers when new opportunities arise. Each college has a system in place to provide short-term training for specific skill sets, as well as to introduce certificate and degree programs to train students for new occupational and career opportunities.

Emphasizing programs that train students for fields with a high demand for workers in the near future serves the state's interests concerning workforce development. Simultaneously preparing students for the workforce and a bachelor's degree also benefits the state. And forging strong partnerships between the colleges and the state's industries, as well as encouraging strong communication among these parties in designing and implementing workforce training at the colleges, will only serve to improve the quality and readiness of the state's labor force.

4. Efficient and effective systems

Maximize return on investment by implementing system-wide efficiencies to enhance community college operations.

Wyoming's colleges have operated very autonomously since their inception. Changes in the economy and advances in technology, however, are providing new incentives and opportunities for them to operate more efficiently, maximizing the state's investment in the colleges. For instance, by

carefully selecting which new programs are offered at each college, ensuring facilities are constructed and renovated with sustainability and flexibility in mind, and taking advantage of the potential savings of distance learning courses, the community colleges may continue to maintain their independence while working to ensure that they take the fullest advantage of the state's investments.

5. Accountability and improvement

Improve the educational success of Wyoming residents by measuring outcomes and responding to findings whether negative or positive.

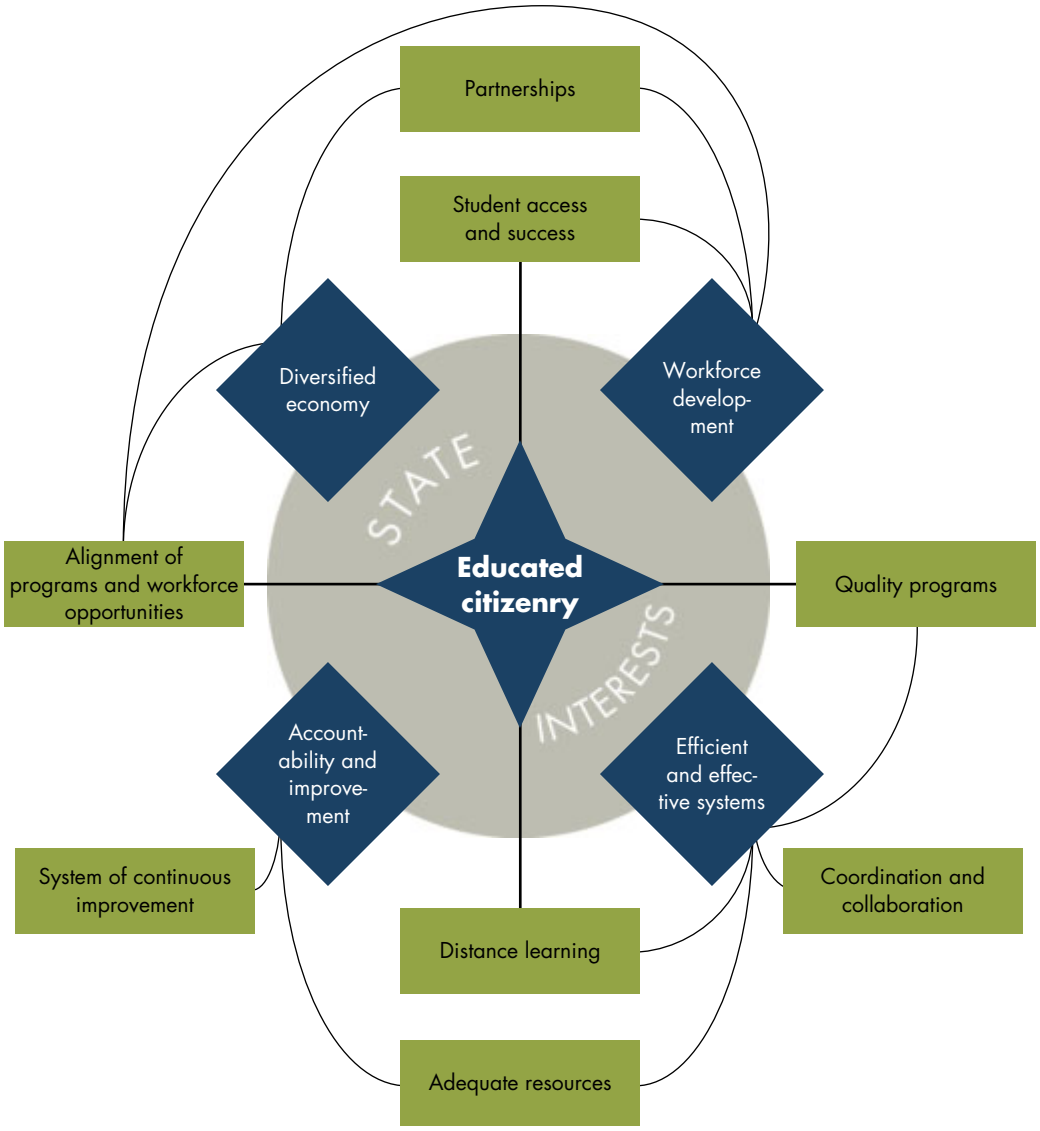
In recent years, Wyoming has made a strong financial commitment to the operational support of its community colleges. In return, legislators are increasingly interested in understanding how the funds are being used, whether the greater investment has paid off in better student outcomes, and what they can expect from their investment in the future.

In serving the interests of the state, the colleges will collect and analyze data on multiple measures of student outcomes and use the findings to inform continuous improvement. The colleges will also take advantage of existing data resources such as the state facilities database and college data systems to make evidence-based decisions.

Strategic Objectives

Each state interest is supported by one or more "strategic objectives." The strategic objectives are goals the community college system will pursue in upcoming years and are designed to serve as the decision-making framework for public investment in community college education. The state interests provide guidance, but the strategic objectives are specific goals and strategies that the state can use to improve the community college system and make decisions on issues such as program approval and capital construction. Exhibit 16 displays the multiple connections between the state interests and strategic objectives.

EXHIBIT 16. Relationship Among State Interests and Strategic Objectives



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Student Access and Success

Promote student access to education and training programs and support students in achieving their educational and professional goals.



As part of the effort to improve Wyoming's community colleges and their services to Wyoming residents, the system should improve outreach and support to those traditionally underrepresented among the state's college-going population. Additionally, the community colleges must work together as a system to improve articulation among the different education sectors and to break down barriers to students' success in achieving their academic and career goals.

STRATEGY 1.1.
Increase need-based state aid to students.

Wyoming's Hathaway Scholarship program offers recent high school graduates merit- and need-based scholarships to continue their education. As summarized in Exhibit 17, students with the requisite grades and test scores are eligible for state support. However, this program does not recognize the additional needs of students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds or return to school later in life.

Data from the NCES 2007–08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) reveal that Wyoming offers state grants to its undergraduates at a rate comparable to the average of all other states. When analyzed further, however, the data reveal that Wyoming offers need-based state grants at a much lower rate than does the rest of the country and merit-only grants at a much higher rate (Exhibit 18).

EXHIBIT 18. Comparison of Undergraduate Grant Receipt in Wyoming and Other States: 2008

State of legal residence	Total state grants	State need-based grants	State merit-only grants
Wyoming	16.2%	1.8%	15.6%
All other states	16.5%	11.3%	4.4%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2008.

According to the *Measuring Up* report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2006), the cost of attending Wyoming's two- and four-year colleges for students from low- and middle-income families represents roughly one-third of their annual family income. At the time of that study, these families earned an average of $21,262 annually. Given the relatively low investment Wyoming makes in need-based aid and the high proportion of average annual income that tuition and fees represent for many Wyoming residents, a serious gap in public support may exist.

EXHIBIT 17. Hathaway Merit-Based Scholarships in Wyoming

Career	Opportunity	Performance	Honors
Students earning: A minimum high school GPA of 2.5, a minimum ACT score of 17, or a cumulative WorkKeys score of 12.	*Students earning:* A minimum high school GPA of 2.5 or a minimum ACT score of 19.	*Students earning:* A minimum high school GPA of 3.0 or a minimum ACT score of 21.	*Students earning:* A minimum high school GPA of 3.5 or a minimum ACT score of 25.
May receive: Up to $800 per semester for up to four full-time semesters at a Wyoming community college. Students earning a certificate with a cumulative GPA of at least 2.25 or a degree may qualify for an additional four semesters of study at a community college.	*May receive:* Up to $800 per semester for up to eight full-time semesters of study. The initial four semesters can be at a Wyoming community college or at the University of Wyoming (UW), but the last four semesters must be at UW.	*May receive:* Up to $1,200 per semester for up to eight full-time semesters of study. The initial four semesters can be at a Wyoming community college or at UW, but the last four semesters must be at UW.	*May receive:* Up to $1,600 per semester for up to eight full-time semesters of study. The initial four semesters can be at a Wyoming community college or at UW, but the last four semesters must be at UW.

SOURCE: Wyoming Hathaway Scholarship Program (n.d.).

The extent of this gap warrants further study, and depending on the outcome of such a review, the state should take appropriate steps to improve student access to and success in its community colleges though financial assistance.

Such a study of student need should include the need-based Hathaway scholarship. This scholarship is intended to augment the merit scholarship by "providing additional assistance for students with unmet financial need," with determination of need made by individual financial aid offices at the community colleges and the University of Wyoming (Wyoming Hathaway Scholarship Program n.d.). Unfortunately, scant data are available on the use of the need-based scholarship. An analysis of the current use of the Hathaway need-based scholarship, as well as an evaluation of eligibility for this aid, should be part of any study of need-based aid in Wyoming.

ACTION STEPS

- Assess eligibility for and use of the need-based component of the Hathaway Scholarship at each college.
- Assess the need for need-based aid among older, non-traditional students, regardless of whether they are enrolled full-time or part-time, and target state aid to those students.
- Introduce a need-based state grant available to all Wyoming residents who attend a community college or the University of Wyoming and who are not getting aid from the Hathaway Scholarship or other sources.

STRATEGY 1.2.
Increase the participation of women in programs leading to employment in occupations meeting the Self-Sufficiency Standard.[6]

The wage disparity between men and women in Wyoming is the largest of any state in the country. According to the Wyoming Council for Women's Issues, the primary causes of the disparity include educational attainment, chosen occupation, and family (Alexander et al. 2003). It is in the state's interest to reduce this disparity, and the state's community colleges are vital to achieving such a goal. A multifaceted approach, including sparking girls' interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at early ages and attracting and training women in fields traditionally dominated by men, will help bring Wyoming's male and female workers closer to pay equity.

In 2003, researchers from the University of Wyoming published a ground-breaking report outlining the wage disparity between men and women in Wyoming (Alexander et al. 2003; National Women's Law Center 2009). At the time, women in Wyoming earned, on average, 63 cents for every dollar earned by men in the state. This inequity has not improved in subsequent years. By comparison, women earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by men nationally in 2003, and this ratio has also remained constant.

One response to this inequity has been to emphasize postsecondary education and training for

[6] Developed in 2005 by Dr. Diana Pearce for the Office of the Governor, Wyoming's Self-Sufficiency Standard "measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic needs—without public or private assistance" (Pearce 2005). This measure was developed in response to the inability of the federal poverty measure to capture the wide variation in the composition of modern households and their common expenses.

Wyoming women. Specific recommendations in the University's report include encouraging women to pursue postsecondary education in marketable, non-traditional fields; motivating girls to pursue science, engineering, technology, and mathematics in elementary and secondary grades; and supporting improved career planning for girls and women (Alexander et al. 2003). This strategic plan is consistent with those recommendations. The action steps recommended here address the problem of gender-based wage inequity in two ways: first, recruiting girls and women into courses of study that lead to non-traditional, sustainable-wage occupations, and second, beginning to identify and address any root causes of inequity that may be present within the colleges.

Given that women outnumber men among those enrolled in higher education in Wyoming, some question why more women are not participating in the high-wage occupations that require a bachelor's degree. The literature suggests that choice of a field of study plays an important role in explaining this phenomenon (Alexander et al. 2003; Programs and Practices That Work 2007). A recent national study of contributing factors to the wage gap found that choice of major among undergraduates accounted for 19 percent of the wage gap among college graduates seven years after graduation (Bobbit-Zeher 2009; Jaschik 2009). Men in Wyoming tend to work in high-wage fields such as mining, oil, construction, and transportation, while women often pursue careers in nursing and teaching, two occupations not nearly as well compensated. While many acknowledge that it is difficult to determine the extent to which women may be influenced to select one major over another, it is clear that gender plays a role in these decisions. Wyoming elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions must encourage young women to consider some oft-overlooked fields, such as the sciences, engineering, mathematics, and technology. Further, some suggest that "brain drain," the outmigration of educated citizens from the state, accounts for some part of the wage inequity, as women with degrees leave the state for more lucrative opportunities elsewhere (Caiazza and Shaw 2004; Alexander et al. 2003).

A review of promising practices for boosting female students' access to non-traditional career and technical education programs yielded some useful approaches that community colleges in Wyoming might initiate to foster greater participation by women in such fields. At the individual level, providing elementary and secondary students with hands-on opportunities to participate in non-traditional occupations may inspire girls' interest in subjects they typically do not pursue. Key to implementing this approach would be providing professional development for elementary and secondary teachers to develop the needed skills to incorporate interactive activities and encourage interest in non-traditional subject areas. Additionally, introducing girls to female role models working in non-traditional occupations during their elementary and secondary years would give them opportunities to connect with professionals who can provide support and guidance. At the levels of the educational institution and the broader community, creating an advisory board of area businesses that already hire or would like to hire non-traditional graduates would help link students and schools to tangible career opportunities in non-traditional fields. Business leaders may also get involved by inviting students not traditionally represented in the field to visit workplaces, job shadow, or intern to gain experience in a different professional arena (McBride 2009; Programs and Practices That Work 2007).

This strategic plan's recommendation is that the community colleges develop an institutional commitment to gender equity, beginning with an evaluation of gender-based pay inequity among employees of the community colleges. Measuring

gender-based pay inequity, if it exists within the community colleges, is only a first step. It is recommended that the colleges explore fully what they may do differently, among students and staff, to mitigate any gender-based inequity. A recent report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education and the state of Ohio describes several existing methods for measuring the root causes of inequity within schools, including surveys of instructional providers and administrators, checklists for teachers and administrators to identify possible gender bias, and online tools to assist institutions in self-studies (Richards 2009).

ACTION STEPS

- Introduce middle and high school outreach activities that expose young women to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics early.
- Recruit female community college students, particularly those who are displaced homemakers or single parents, into non-traditional career fields through enhanced career counseling and marketing.
- Continually seek pay equity for women employed by the community colleges.

STRATEGY 1.3.
Enable students to register easily at any community college in the state.

The creation of a common entry point for students to register at any community college and the University of Wyoming would be a boon for the state's students and would likely reduce operating costs for the state. Because it is not uncommon for students to enroll at more than one postsecondary institution in Wyoming during their academic careers, learning to navigate one registration Web tool rather than several would simplify the process. A recent report published by the University of Wyoming (UW) Outreach Center at Casper (Maggard 2008) explored the extent to which postsecondary students in the state "double-dip" (simultaneously take courses at two or more institutions) and "swirl" (move back and forth between institutions). The author found that between the 2001–02 and 2005–06 academic years, 58 percent of degree-seeking and 56 percent of non-degree-seeking students at the University had swirled or double-dipped. The same report also found that, during the 2005–06 academic year, 39 percent of first-year UW students were double-dipping. Given how common it is for students to attend multiple institutions, whether simultaneously or in succession, a single online portal for all seven community colleges and the University would provide students with access to the information and functionality they need to successfully navigate these different institutions. This type of common registration tool would especially support those students who want to take advantage of distance learning courses offered by other colleges. A common portal would allow students to scan college offerings quickly and easily, determine which courses or programs offered at specific institutions interest them, and register for them.

While creating such a portal may not be started immediately, given fiscal constraints, some first steps could be taken now. The shell of the future common portal could be created immediately, including links to each college's Website, a common application accepted by all seven institutions, and descriptions and links to additional information. This platform would serve students immediately as a single source of information about all seven colleges, as well as provide the basis for a more sophisticated Web tool in the future. During development, consideration would also have to be given to designing the tool to be compatible with other state Web portals, such as the Fusion Website currently being developed by the Wyoming Department of Education (McBride 2009).

To enable students to take courses freely throughout the community college system, colleges must implement common thresholds for the COMPASS[7] placement assessment and the ACT. Recently published reports by Jobs for the Future (Collins 2009) and Achieving the Dream (Collins 2008) highlight the burgeoning trend of system-wide implementation of common placement scores and policies. The author of those reports found that the process of setting common placement test cut scores had unexpected benefits beyond simply achieving consistency, including fostering fruitful collaborative discussions among K–12 schools, two-year colleges, and four-year postsecondary institutions about academic preparedness for the transition to college. Wyoming's community colleges have taken some steps to reconcile the cut scores used to place students in remedial reading, writing, and mathematics courses, but inconsistencies remain.

Exhibits 19–26 show the guidelines each college uses to place students in writing, reading, and mathematics courses, based on their scores on the COMPASS assessment and ACT. For instance, a student who scores between zero and 19 on the COMPASS writing assessment at Central Wyoming College is placed in Adult Basic Education (ABE). While at Casper College, a student who scores between zero and 42 is placed in English 0600.

Exhibit 19 shows that cut scores for placement in college-level writing courses are not consistent across all colleges. Cut scores for placement in college-level reading courses are similar (Exhibit 20), though not completely consistent. The colleges should reconcile all of these scores across their campuses. When looking at the other cut scores, beyond those that separate remedial and non-remedial students, there is much more variation.

EXHIBIT 19. Writing COMPASS Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

WRITING	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
ABE		0–19					
Engl 0600	0–42				0–58	0–46	
Engl 0610	43–74	20–46			59–74	47–74	
Engl 0620		47–74	0–19				0–38
Engl 0630			20–30	0–56			0–38
Engl 0640			31–74				
Engl 0950							0–38
Engl 0955							39–74
Engl 700/Other				57–74			
No Reading Improvement Required	75–100	75–100	75–100	75–100	75–100	75–100	75–100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

[7] The COMPASS assessments are a set of widely-used, computer-adaptive placement tests published by ACT that allow colleges to assess incoming students' mathematics, reading, and writing skills. All seven community colleges in Wyoming use this assessment.

EXHIBIT 20. Reading COMPASS Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

READING	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
ABE		0–49				0–34	
Basic Reading I / Engl 0510	0–51	50–60	0–50	0–58	0–58	35–49	0–40
Basic Reading II / Engl 0520	52–74	61–70	51–67	59–74	59–74	50–75	41–70
No Reading Improvement Required	75–100	71–100	68–100	75–100	75–100	76–100	71–100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

Among mathematics courses, there are small, but nontrivial, inconsistencies. For instance, Western Wyoming Community College's pre-algebra cut score for placement in college-level courses is 32, while the remaining colleges use 45 (Exhibit 21). Casper's cut score for algebra students entering Math 1450 is higher than for other campuses (Exhibit 22). For college algebra, Eastern Wyoming College and Casper College appear to place students differently based on COMPASS scores as well (Exhibit 23). The colleges have reached consistent cut scores for students entering trigonometry courses (Exhibit 24).

EXHIBIT 21. Pre-Algebra COMPASS Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

MATH: Pre-Algebra	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
ABE		0–22					
Math/DVST 0860			0–22				
Math 0500		23–44					
Math/DVST 0900	0–44		23–44	0–44		0–44	0–31
DVST 0510					0–44		
Tech 1000							32–44
Math 0924	30–44						
Math/DVST 0920, 0600, 1500, 1515	45–100	45–100	45–100	45–100	45–100	45–100	32–100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

EXHIBIT 22. Algebra COMPASS Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

MATH: Algebra	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
Math 0600, 0920	0–39	0–39	0–39	0–39	0–39	0–39	0–39
Math 0934	28–39						
Math 1500		0–39			40–65		
Math 1515			0–65				
Math 0930, 0700, 1100, 1510	40–65	40–65	40–65	40–65	40–65	40–65	40–65
Math 1000	40–65	40–65	40–100		40–65		40–65
Math 1050						66–100	66–100
Math 1400	66–100	66–100	66–100	66–100	66–100	66–100	66–100
Math 1450	75–100		66–100		66–100	66–100	

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

EXHIBIT 23. College Algebra COMPASS Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

MATH: College Algebra	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
Math 1000			0–64				
Math 1400, 1050	0–64	0–64	65–100	0–64	0–64		0–64
Math 1450	32–64		65–100		0–64		
Math 1405, 2350	65–100	65–100		65–100	65–100		65–100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

EXHIBIT 24. Trigonometry COMPASS Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

MATH: Trigonometry	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
Math 1405	0–60	0–60	0–60	0–60	0–60	0–60	0–60
Math 2350	0–60	0–60	0–60			0–60	0–60
Math 2200	61–100	61–100	61–100	61–100	61–100	61–100	61–100

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

The ways in which the colleges use entering students' ACT scores to place them in remedial or college-level courses should also be consistent systemwide. As Exhibits 25 and 26 illustrate, notable differences in cut scores exist from college to college. Again, when looking beyond the cut scores that determine whether students are placed in college-level or remedial courses to the scores that determine which remedial courses are appropriate, much more variation exists across campuses. In

EXHIBIT 25. English ACT Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

ENGLISH	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
ABE		0–11					
Engl 0600	0–13					0–14	
Engl 0610	14–19	12–14				15–18	
Engl 0620		15–18					
No improvement needed	20–36	19–36	18–36	22–36	23–36	19–36	23–26

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

Exhibit 26. Math ACT Assessment Cut Scores for Wyoming Community Colleges as of June 2009

MATH	Casper	Central	Eastern	LCCC	NWCCD	Northwest	Western
ABE		0–13					
Math 0500		14–18					
Math 0600, 1500		19–20					
Math 0900	0–9					0–18	
Math 0924	10–13						
Math 0920	14–16					19–20	
Math 0934	17–20						
Math 0930, 1515, 700	21–22		21–22	21–22		21–22	
Math 1100	21–22			21–22		23–24	
Math 1510	14–16	21–22				19–20	
Math 1000	21–22	21–22	21–22	21–22		23–24	21–22
Math 1400, 1450	23–25	23–24	23–24	23–24	23–24	23–24	23
Math 1405	26	25–26	25	25–26	25	25–26	
Math 2350	26	25–26	26	25–26	25	25–26	
Math 2200	27–36	27–36	27–36	27–36	27–36	27–36	

SOURCE: Data supplied by Carmen Simone, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Casper); J.D. Rottweiler, Executive Vice President for Academic Services (Central); Richard Holcomb, Vice President for Learning (Eastern); Marlene Tignor, Vice President of Instruction (LCCC); Sher Hruska, Vice President for Academic Affairs (Northwest); Norleen Healy, Interim Vice President Academic Affairs (NWCCD); Sandy Caldwell, Associate Vice President for Student Learning (Western).

those cases when students transfer from one community college to another, one can imagine how these differing placement scores might cause problems for those students. For instance, a student designated as college-ready at one college may choose to transfer to another college in the state and find that she or he is designated as needing developmental education due to differences in cut scores. To avoid this kind of inconsistency, and promote students' ability to choose course offerings freely throughout the community colleges, the colleges should reconcile student placement scores for remedial placement.

ACTION STEPS

- Provide a common online enrollment portal for all community colleges.
- Adopt common placement thresholds for the reading, writing, and mathematics COMPASS assessments and ACT across all seven community colleges.

STRATEGY 1.4.
Improve statewide articulation of courses among high schools, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming.

Easing the transition from one educational institution to another can help provide Wyoming citizens with the greatest possible access to higher education. Allowing high school students to take college-level courses, developing career and technical education pathways for students pursuing specific career interests after high school, and building articulation agreements among all community colleges and the University of Wyoming are crucial steps in expanding access and ultimately improving educational and professional attainment.

Several initial steps toward expanding cross-sector articulation should be undertaken right away. First, Wyoming's strategic plan for career and technical education includes a section devoted to articulation in which it recommends developing statewide articulation agreements between secondary career pathways and postsecondary programs of study (Hoachlander, Klein, and Studier 2007). This recommendation is still timely, and acting on it would be a huge step forward for the community colleges.

Second, while it would be ideal for all community college programs to articulate with relevant programs at the University of Wyoming, a good way to build on what already exists would be focusing on the development of statewide articulation agreements for those programs likely to lead to jobs in fields offering compensation meeting the Self-Sufficiency Standard.[8]

Some Wyoming high school students have had the opportunity to take college-level classes through concurrent enrollment agreements with the community colleges. Expanding access to these enrollment opportunities, especially for students who traditionally do not seek postsecondary education, should be the next step. To this end, this plan's recommendation is to determine whether students who are academically prepared for college-level work are not participating in concurrent enrollment, address the barriers these students face, and encourage them to participate.

[8] Developed in 2005 by Dr. Diana Pearce for the Office of the Governor, Wyoming's Self-Sufficiency Standard "measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic need—without public or private assistance" (Pearce 2005). This measure was developed in response to the inability of the federal poverty measure to capture the wide variation in the composition of modern households and their common expenses.

ACTION STEPS

- Focus articulation between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming on programs leading to occupations with pay that meets the Self-Sufficiency Standard.
- Align the work of the community colleges with the state's strategic plan for career and technical education.
- Expand concurrent enrollment by encouraging participation among high school students ready for college-level work.

STRATEGY 1.5.
Increase outreach to special populations.

Besides providing more need-based financial support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, community colleges should make it a priority to reach out to students from underserved populations and encourage their educational success. Adult basic education (ABE) programs—including English as a second language (ESL) and general educational development (GED) programs—are critical to the success of these populations.

Evidence suggests that low-skill adults who participate in ABE, GED, and ESL programs rarely enroll in college-level courses. For instance, a 2005 study of roughly 35,000 community college students in the state of Washington revealed that only 30 percent of ABE and GED students and 13 percent of ESL students progressed to taking college-level courses within five years (Prince and Jenkins 2005). A host of barriers and nonacademic factors contribute to these low rates of achievement. But researchers and practitioners have suggested some promising practices to ameliorate some of the difficult situations facing low-skill adult learners. These practices include integrating language instruction into career and technical education and adult literacy curricula; weaving workforce skills into literacy education; breaking instruction into curricular modules to allow many entry and exit points; and offering an accelerated path through developmental material for those who excel. Additional support, such as academic and career counseling, transportation, childcare, and mental and physical healthcare, can help create the conditions under which these students may achieve (Bragg et al. 2007; Prince and Jenkins 2005; Jenkins n.d.).

Wyoming community colleges already offer programs for low-skill adult learners, and the colleges are not the only providers of these services. But given the challenges facing these students and their low chances of even beginning a college-level course of study, the state should explore adoption of some of these promising practices as a means to develop more robust and flexible adult education offerings. The state should also consider increasing its funding for ABE programs, as the colleges currently bear a large share of the cost of these non-credit programs. It is urgent for the WCCC and the individual colleges to advocate for such an increase in state support for adult education.

Ultimately, the goal is to give these learners many chances to participate in postsecondary education and employment that offers living wages. Students who succeed in moving from developmental education to college-level work should be given clear direction about how they can continue their education at the community colleges. The courses that make up developmental education programs at the community colleges should be linked to the 16 career clusters[9] adopted by the state.

[9] Wyoming has adopted the 16 career clusters identified by the U.S. Department of Education as an organizing tool for career and technical education programs. For more information about

ACTION STEPS

- Advocate for greater funding for adult basic education.
- Continue to support adult basic education instruction in community colleges to promote success for students from underserved communities.
- Connect adult basic education programs to career pathways opportunities.

STRATEGY 1.6.
Enhance wrap-around services offered by the colleges to support student success.

In combination with more need-based financial aid and support for adult basic education programs, enhanced wrap-around services would benefit all students, but especially those from underserved communities. These services are designed to address some of the barriers to students' academic success and create conditions under which students can succeed academically.

Wrap-around services include many forms of support, some more directly related to academics than others. In the academic realm, a variety of counseling and advising services can help support students. These include academic guidance to help students plan their path to educational and career goals, academic supports such as online and in-person tutoring, and financial assistance with course materials (Center for Community College Student Engagement 2009; Karp, O'Gara, and Hughes 2008; Mendoza 2008). Results from the 2008 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) revealed that all kinds of students valued student services, including counseling, tutoring, childcare, and financial advising, though many reported they did not take advantage of these resources. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents indicated that academic advising was "very" important to them, while a mere 13 percent reported using these services "often." The authors of the CCSSE report urged community colleges to incorporate these kinds of support services into the curriculum as a means to give students more direct access (Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2008; Moltz 2008).

A prominent example of excellent community college support services comes from Valencia College in Florida. Its LifeMap program gives students a step-by-step tool to plan their life, academic, and career goals, supported by in-person guidance from college faculty and staff. LifeMap is used at every step of the student's college experience, from making a transition into the institution, to planning each semester's courses, to graduating and planning future pursuits, either in higher education or employment (Valencia Community College 2009).

To be sure, Wyoming's community colleges provide many of the services offered by LifeMap. What makes this example so valuable and worthy of consideration by Wyoming colleges, however, is how thoroughly support is integrated into a student's life for his or her entire time at college. As Norton Grubb, a nationally recognized expert in community college research, reported recently, services such as guidance and counseling, especially for disadvantaged students, are often "underfunded, underused, and sometimes embattled" (Grubb 2006). A recent publication for the Community College Research Center underscores this observation, explaining that the use of support services often depends on students' awareness of their existence and skill in navigating the system

these career clusters, see http://www.careerclusters.org/16clusters.cfm

to find the help they need (Karp, O'Gara, and Hughes 2008). Because many students come to postsecondary education with a wide variety of challenges, a clear, well-publicized, and accessible step-by-step system for academic planning and support can help ensure that they get the assistance they need in charting their course to graduation and beyond.

No less important are the nonacademic services colleges can provide to foster student success, including personal counseling, such as mental health and crisis intervention services, and access to and financial support for childcare services, housing, and transportation. Programs such as Capital IDEA in Austin, Texas demonstrate the value of these services (Mendoza 2008). This program helps disadvantaged people whose income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty benchmark to gain the life and professional skills they need to enroll in community college and ultimately secure high-wage jobs. IDEA provides enrollees with one-on-one career counseling and financial support for course materials, tuition, personal expenses, and childcare as needed. The program also offers transportation to those who need it. IDEA has developed solid partnerships with other human services providers, businesses, community organizations, and others in the community, to supplement its own offerings.

Although limited resources may constrain the support services that Wyoming can offer, it is often the nonacademic challenges, such as parenting young children or holding down one or more jobs that hinder students and keep them from achieving their academic and professional goals. And as the literature reflects, student services in community colleges may be especially vulnerable to cuts during tight fiscal times, largely because the impact of these services can be difficult to measure (Purnell et al. 2004). But there appears to be wide agreement in the field that in order to encourage students' success, colleges must consider making these support services available to their students.

ACTION STEPS

- Enable all community college students to develop a personal pathway allowing them to maximize the use of college resources in pursuing their goals.
- Increase childcare capacity for students with families.
- Increase housing for students with families or those who live too far away to commute.

STRATEGY 1.7.
Recognize student success through the community college funding allocation formula.

Wyoming Statute § 21-18-202(c) assigns WCCC's administrative functions, providing it with the authority to approve a funding allocation formula. Chapter 5 of the WCCC's Rules and Regulations, last revised in December 2008, outlines in detail the components of the funding allocation formula and how it is implemented (Wyoming Community College Commission 2008e).

In recent months, legislators, the colleges, and the WCCC have engaged in discussions regarding the inclusion of a completion element in the community college funding allocation model. This section recommends that the WCCC include a measure of course completion in the funding allocation model as an initial step toward introducing student success as a formula component. There are several reasons course completion is a viable first step toward a greater focus on student outcomes within the formula. First, the colleges can easily report data on students' course completion to the WCCC

without taking on a significant data and reporting burden. Each term, the colleges already report data on student enrollment in courses as of a standard cut-off date. The colleges could simply use the same enrollment file submitted to the WCCC, wait until the term is over, and update the file to indicate whether a student completed the course. In addition, colleges around the county, including Western Wyoming Community College, already report similar data to the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP), so there is a precedent for course completion measures.

Second, completion of a program or course of study can be difficult to determine and can be affected by challenges outside the colleges' control. Students' family and job responsibilities, income, transportation, and housing can all affect a student's ability to maintain her or his enrollment over multiple terms. However, enrollment in and completion of a course takes much less time, decreasing, but not eliminating, the potential for short-term effects from these issues and others.

Course completion is a feasible first step toward introducing elements of student success into the funding allocation formula. Strategy 7.2 discusses a longer-term approach to adding additional student success measures, as well as program quality measures, to the formula in the future. It will be important for the WCCC, colleges, and other partners to collaborate on identifying and designing measures that will be effective in promoting the goals of student success and program quality through the funding allocation formula.

ACTION STEP

- Implement a student success component within the Wyoming community college funding allocation formula. Award 10 percent of variable costs within the formula based on course completion.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Quality Programs

Offer quality, relevant programs that meet state and local needs.

Community colleges are

ideally situated to adapt to the changing economic, demographic, social, and technological circumstances in local communities and states. While no single community college can offer enough programs to meet every resident's need or interest, employers, the state, and the colleges must set priorities that promote state and local education and economic development targets. In support of this goal, the colleges and the WCCC must collaborate to identify and implement programs to ensure that state and local investment pays off in substantive returns to the public.

STRATEGY 2.1.
Ensure that colleges can adapt quickly to respond to local workforce and community needs.

Comprehensive community colleges have a broad mission: to serve thousands of residents; promote economic development through partnerships with business and industry; train and retrain current and future workers; and meet the continuing education needs of workers in many occupations. Comprehensive community colleges also battle illiteracy through adult basic education and English as a Second Language programs and offer a second chance to dropouts through General Educational Development programs. Ultimately, comprehensive community colleges teach people, young and old, how to contribute to their communities as responsible and ethical citizens (Dejardin 1992).

The strength of Wyoming community colleges comes from their comprehensive nature. Every college in the state offers academic transfer, career and technical education, adult education, workforce development, and adult continuing education courses and programs. This strategic plan does not diminish the importance or strength of any of these areas. On the contrary, it recognizes that Wyoming benefits enormously from the comprehensive educational programs offered by community colleges. However, not every program can or should be offered at every college—although each *program area* must be available to meet the community college region's needs.

Each college's local board of trustees is elected by community members who have a stake in the success and progress of the college and the community it serves. The trustees are involved in their communities through their professional careers and personal commitments, and they can identify and assess changing local trends quickly based on those connections. A significant loss of local control—meaning losing the ability to propose and eliminate programs based on local economic and education trends—would render the colleges less responsive to their communities' needs.

The Department of Employment prepares periodic reports on labor market, industry, and occupational trends throughout the state. Though these reports are already useful in their current state, the colleges and the system would benefit from reports targeted to the individual college regions. The plan's recommendation is that the WCCC collaborate with the Department of Employment to create a biennial report that shows labor market, industry, and occupational trends for the state and the seven college districts.

The action steps listed below seek to preserve local control while providing community college boards with a framework for and information about aligning their locally developed programs with state interests.

ACTION STEPS

- Maintain academic, career and technical, developmental, adult continuing, and workforce education programs at all colleges to support education and skill development to meet local business, community, and economic needs.

- Collaborate with the Department of Employment to build upon existing data resources and publications to develop a report targeted for use by community colleges. Tailor a biennial report of Wyoming economic and labor market trends to community college regions.

- Implement periodic reviews of college strategic and master plans to ensure that they are aligned with the statewide strategic plan.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Distance Learning

Expand the role of distance learning in serving rural and hard-to-reach populations and in providing cost-saving access and educational services for students and colleges.

Distance learning at Wyoming community colleges has grown dramatically in recent years. In spring 2009, the WyClass Website of the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium listed 1,200 courses available through distance learning, more than four times the number offered in fall 2003, when 284 courses were listed (Wyoming Community College Distance Education



Task Force 2004). The rapid growth of distance learning in Wyoming mirrors national trends. A recent survey of over 2,500 postsecondary distance learning programs indicates that the recent economic downturn and anticipated rises in fuel costs are likely to increase the demand for distance learning in the future (Allen and Seaman 2008). Wyoming's community college distance learning programs need additional support, both to meet current demands and to respond to new ones.

STRATEGY 3.1.
Provide support to strengthen a statewide system for distance learning.

Recognizing the importance of distance learning in providing high-quality education to Wyoming citizens, the governor appointed a Task Force on Distance Education, Video Conferencing, and IP-Based Communications in 2008. Wainhouse Research was selected to conduct a needs assessment and inventory of distance education that includes K–12 education and the Wyoming Department of Education, community colleges, the University of Wyoming, government training, and professional and lifelong learning. The final report, released in August 2009, found increased state leadership and coordination to be the top need identified by stakeholders (Greenberg et al. 2009). Such leadership would aid in sharing resources, enhance pedagogical and technical support, and serve to inform and connect those interested in promoting and advancing distance learning in Wyoming.

The report notes that although the individual colleges in Wyoming have rapidly developed an extensive menu of distance education services, such efforts at individual colleges have been uneven. Distance learning specialists at the colleges have taken steps, through the Wyoming Distance Education Consortium (WyDEC), to coordinate their efforts and share effective strategies and best practices. With increased coordination among the colleges' distance learning programs, opportunities to share materials and expertise will grow and may facilitate the development of new distance learning opportunities at colleges where the number of courses and programs are relatively small. Other states are also promoting coordination to enhance their distance education programs. North Carolina, for example, maintains a virtual learning community that allows faculty to view and download materials to assist in developing distance learning courses and exchanging information (North Carolina Community College System 2009). At the next level, the Task Force on Distance Education's 2009 report suggests the Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative as a model (Greenberg et al. 2009; Michigan Community College Association 1999–2009). Michigan's portal combines coursetaking, registration, and a menu of student services and advising for community college distance learners across the state. Ultimately, coordination in Wyoming might also extend to other state education agencies and include opportunities for adult and K–12 students through, for example, links with the Wyoming Department of Education's distance education initiative.[10] New Mexico, for example, recently created a single Web portal for e-learning at all levels of education throughout the state and adopted a common platform for all distance courses (IDEAL-NM 2008–09).

The need for increased statewide coordination in Wyoming also extends to the systems for registering and paying for distance courses. Currently, individual colleges manage registration and payment for distance education courses. Students identified the current system, which requires a

[10] The Wyoming Switchboard Network (WSN) provides access to K–12 courses and providers statewide. For more information, see http://www.k12.wy.us/TCD/WSN/index.asp (accessed August 27, 2009).

student to register and pay at each college separately, as a barrier to taking distance education courses at other campuses (see Strategy 1.3). Faculty and administrators also expressed concern that the current funding formula, as applied to distance education, fuels competition among the colleges for students. Respondents suggested experimenting with incentives for collaboration, such as colleges sharing the full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment earned through distance learning if a student from one college district enrolls in a distance learning course in another district.

The Wyoming Distance Education Consortium (WyDEC) coordinates the colleges' distance education programs. WyDEC facilitates the sharing of strategies for distance learning and best practices among the colleges. As distance learning opportunities expand, WyDEC can play a valuable role in maintaining high standards of quality and developing statewide digital resources, such as an archive of online course materials for instructors. The Consortium Website not only lists the distance learning courses offered at all community colleges and the University of Wyoming but also provides information on student support services and degree programs.

The following action items are designed to build on the existing foundation in distance education by encouraging further program development, cross-college cooperation, and student access.

ACTION STEPS

- Increase fiscal support for WyDEC's coordination of distance learning statewide, including the WyClass Website.

- Develop and implement a distance learning funding formula that encourages colleges to share resources and students.

STRATEGY 3.2.
Expand distance learning opportunities.

During 2007–08, distance learning accounted for 16 percent of credit full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment across all community colleges and from 8 to 22 percent of credit FTE at individual institutions (Exhibit 27). More than 5,000 students enrolled in community college distance education courses statewide in the fall and spring semesters of 2007–08. Distance learning courses have the heaviest enrollments during the summer months, when they account for about 36 percent of community college enrollments overall and about half of the students enrolled at Casper, Central Wyoming, Laramie County, and Northwest Community Colleges. During MPR's site visits to the community colleges, the researchers learned that many college students take distance education courses while working and living at home during the summer. The many courses currently offered, however, do not meet student demand, which continues to increase. Distance education leaders at the colleges noted that many courses have waiting lists, and that more programs of study offered completely or in part through distance learning are also needed.

Distance learning reaches students in remote rural areas as well as those whose work or family obligations make attending courses on campus difficult. Interviews with distance education administrators and students revealed that students choose distance education courses when they live far from a college or outreach center or have work or family obligations that make attending an on-campus class difficult. Many students, however, also combine distance and on-campus learning. At Central Wyoming College, for example, an estimated three-quarters of students

EXHIBIT 27. Credit Enrollments in Distance Learning Courses at Wyoming Community Colleges: 2007–08

	2007–08		Summer 2007				Fall 2007				Spring 2008			
College	Distance education FTE[1]	Percent total FTE	Head-count	Percent total head-count	FTE	Percent total FTE	Head-count	Percent total head-count	FTE	Percent total FTE	Head-count	Percent total head-count	FTE	Percent total FTE
Casper	567.8	16.4%	577	47.6%	226.4	50.1%	1,183	27.2%	447.2	13.2%	1,199	30.4%	461.9	15.1%
Central	300.7	20.9	278	55.5	107.0	48.6	564	27.8	236.3	16.5	627	35.2	258.1	21.1
Eastern	85.8	8.2	34	11.3	10.2	18.7	166	10.7	67.7	6.4	237	16.2	93.8	9.6
LCCC	653.0	17.5	710	45.3	232.8	38.4	1,496	30.6	508.6	14.9	1,386	28.0	564.6	16.4
NWCCD	148.5	7.6	118	14.3	31.6	18.7	405	12.3	126.4	6.2	428	12.5	139	8.3
Northwest	202.5	11.4	161	45.0	49.3	40.8	469	26.8	153.0	8.5	588	34.0	202.6	12.4
Western	443.5	21.6	303	24.2	105.0	43.1	906	26.9	390.0	19.9	913	24.8	392.0	20.6
State total	2,401.4	15.5	2,148	35.7	762.0	40.8	5,071	23.9	1,929.1	12.8	5,242	25.0	2,111.7	15.2

[1] Annualized FTE is calculated by adding the FTE enrollments for the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters and dividing the total by two.
SOURCE: Distance education enrollment data: Wyoming Community College Commission; Total enrollment data: Wyoming Community College Commission (2008d).

enrolled in online classes in 2007–08 also took classes on campus.[11] Students combine distance and on-campus classes because they want more flexibility in their schedules or because a class is not currently offered on campus. Distance learning also expands the dual-credit courses available to high school students. The many types of students served by distance education indicate its importance in sustaining and increasing access to postsecondary education in Wyoming.

To serve these students better, several colleges are developing distance learning degree programs. In the future, degree programs offered wholly or in part through distance learning potentially could combine courses from several colleges, building on each college's strengths, reducing program duplication, and increasing student access. Increased distance learning opportunities would open access to students not currently served by the colleges as well as expand programs for those currently enrolled.

One challenge the colleges face in expanding distance learning is finding faculty qualified and willing to teach distance learning courses. Professional development, emphasizing the differences between distance and classroom teaching, may increase faculty confidence and promote a willingness to participate. Dedicated technical support for course design and delivery and financial support for course development also would free faculty to focus on course content and student learning.

Student support services, including prospective student tutorials, online or telephone tutoring, and technical support, are essential components of strong distance learning programs (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Educa-

[11] Email communication, Martha Davey, Assistant Dean, Student Learning & Curriculum Development, Central Wyoming College.

tion 2006b). National research indicates that, although the gap has narrowed in recent years, completion rates for distance learning courses at community colleges lag behind the rates for traditional courses (Institutional Technology Council 2009). Monitoring student progress and providing students with the support they need while engaged in distance learning may improve their success.

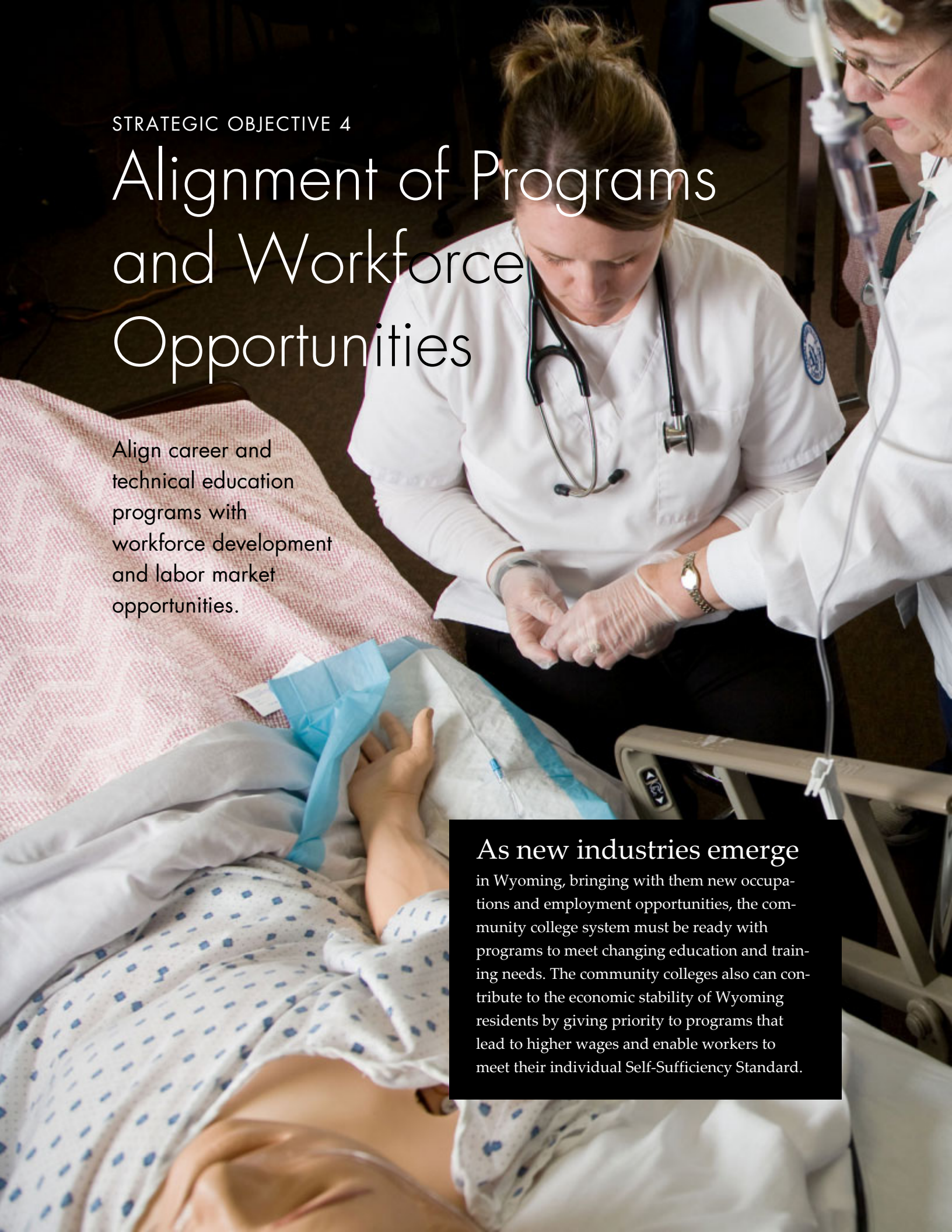
ACTION STEPS

- Assess the need for increasing the number of programs of study offered through distance learning.
- Offer professional development to support faculty offering distance learning courses and recruit new faculty to teach distance courses.
- Ensure that distance learning students have access to the same or equivalent student support services that are available to students attending courses on campus.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Alignment of Programs and Workforce Opportunities

Align career and technical education programs with workforce development and labor market opportunities.



As new industries emerge

in Wyoming, bringing with them new occupations and employment opportunities, the community college system must be ready with programs to meet changing education and training needs. The community colleges also can contribute to the economic stability of Wyoming residents by giving priority to programs that lead to higher wages and enable workers to meet their individual Self-Sufficiency Standard.

STRATEGY 4.1.

Target programs to industries projected to have the greatest number of job openings now and over the next 10 years and that will assist residents to reach their Self-Sufficiency Standard.

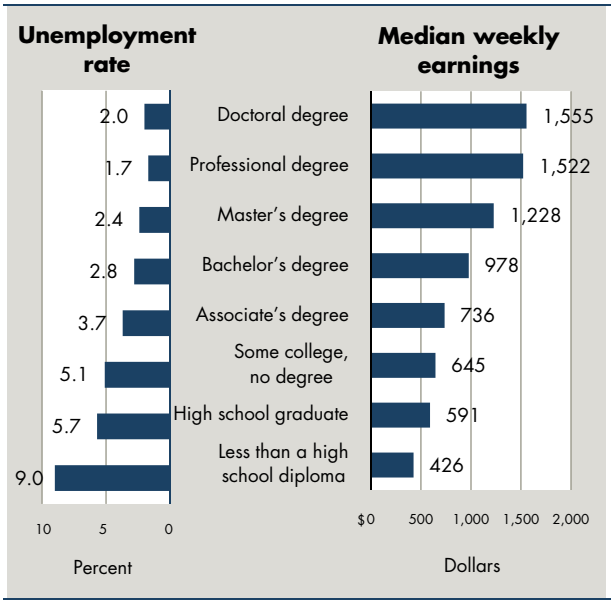
New and growing industries will provide employment opportunities at many levels, from low-wage and low-skill jobs to those requiring advanced skills and offering higher pay. While the state needs a labor pool to meet demand in many industries, community colleges should consider focusing education and training programs on occupations with the greatest potential for helping people reach their Self-Sufficiency Standard and those that are in high demand within a region and the state.

Self-sufficiency requires a number of individual, community, and governmental pillars of support. Individuals can have an impact on increasing their income, and education can have a substantial impact on the level of wages earned (Exhibit 28). Students who are prepared for employment in occupations that are growing and offering greater opportunities in Wyoming or the region are more likely to see a long-term positive effect on their incomes. By targeting programs to growing occupations that will offer self-sufficiency wages to employees, Wyoming community colleges can help more state residents reach their personal Self-Sufficiency Standard.

Meeting Wyoming's future workforce needs will require the WCCC and colleges to strengthen their partnerships with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), the Department of Employment, the Workforce Development Council (WDC), and the Wyoming Business Council (WBC). Each of these entities is already heavily involved in projecting and planning for future needs, and aligning those efforts with the community college system's strategies will benefit the state. The plan's recommendation is that the WCCC partner with these agencies and organizations to hold a biennial planning meeting focused on identifying the current and future economic and workforce trends that will affect educational needs in the state. The community college system will focus on planning for the future: What industries and occupations will be needed in future years? What educational programs already exist to address those needs and will an expansion be required? Are new programs needed?

At the time of this publication, three community colleges have partnered with local school districts and a local business to pilot a Career Pathways program. Central Wyoming College has partnered

EXHIBIT 28.
Education Pays: Percentage of Individuals Who Were Unemployed and Their Median Weekly Earnings: 2008



NOTE: Data are 2008 annual averages for individuals age 25 and older. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Retrieved September 4, 2009, from http://www.bls.gov/emp/emptab7.htm.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wyoming

In 2005, Governor Freudenthal's office released a report titled *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wyoming* (Pearce 2005). The report details the process of creating and implementing the Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard, which "measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet their basic needs—without public or private assistance" (Pearce 2005, p. 1). Wyoming found that the federal poverty level was an inadequate measure of what a family needs to sustain itself and decided to create an index that more closely represents the point "where economic independence begins" for individuals and families (p. 3). The Self-Sufficiency Standard identifies an income amount required to meet the needs of a person or family in their own marketplace without assistance from public or private subsidies. The measure accounts for the cost of employment, such as transportation, taxes, and childcare; differences in costs due to location; the age of children in a family; and the effect of taxes and tax credits to create a customized index applicable to any Wyoming resident or family.

The methodology used to create Wyoming's Self-Sufficiency Standard has been used in more than 30 other states, allowing for comparisons of similar states and regions; Exhibit 29 shows a comparison of the Self-Sufficiency Standard in Cheyenne and other comparably-sized cities in 2004. At that time, a single adult in Cheyenne needed an hourly wage of $6.47 to meet basic needs, the third lowest of the cities selected. For the other three family types in Cheyenne, the Self-Sufficiency Standards are the second lowest. However, these still require a single adult to earn more than $10 an hour to support one or more children.

EXHIBIT 29. Self-Sufficiency Standard for Cheyenne, Wyoming, Compared with Other U.S. Locations: 2004

Single Adult		Single Adult, Preschooler		Single Adult, Preschooler, School Age		Two Adults, Preschooler, School Age[1]	
Green Bay, WI	$6.36	Lafayette, LA	$9.28	Lafayette, LA	$11.78	Lafayette, LA	$7.48
Lafayette, LA	6.40	Cheyenne, WY	10.15	Cheyenne, WY	12.26	Cheyenne, WY	7.86
Cheyenne, WY	6.47	Rapid City, SD	11.16	Enid, OK	13.60	Rapid City, SD	8.46
Rapid City, SD	6.59	Enid, OK	11.18	Rapid City, SD	13.81	Enid, OK	8.96
Enid, OK	6.68	Grand Junction, CO	12.02	Carson City, NV	14.62	Grand Junction, CO	9.05
Great Falls, MT	7.11	Green Bay, WI	12.48	Grand Junction, CO	14.96	Carson City, NV	9.08
Pittsfield, MA	7.15	Great Falls, MT	12.82	Great Falls, MT	15.67	Green Bay, WI	9.34
Grand Junction, CO	7.24	Carson City, NV	12.83	Missoula, MT	15.71	Bellingham, WA	9.70
Missoula, MT	7.49	Missoula, MT	13.03	Green Bay, WI	16.07	Great Falls, MT	9.73
Bellingham, WA	7.81	Bellingham, WA	14.23	Bellingham, WA	16.51	Missoula, MT	9.73
Carson City, NV	7.91	Pittsfield, MA	14.85	Pittsfield, MA	17.39	Pittsfield, MA	10.19
Fort Collins, CO	8.33	Fort Collins, CO	15.16	Fort Collins, CO	17.92	Fort Collins, CO	10.41
Flagstaff, AZ	9.60	Flagstaff, AZ	15.91	Flagstaff, AZ	18.65	Flagstaff, AZ	11.02

[1] Per adult.
NOTE: All wages are updated to September 2004 using the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
SOURCE: Pearce (2005).

with Teton County School District #1, the Wyoming Lodging and Restaurant Association, and the Four Seasons restaurant in Jackson to offer a Pathways program in culinary studies. Northern Wyoming Community College District partnered with Campbell County School District and numerous hospitality businesses led by the Chophouse Restaurant to offer a hospitality program in Gillette. And Laramie County Community College has partnered with Laramie County School District #1 and TMA Global Wind Energy Systems to offer a Pathways program for wind energy technicians. The plan's recommendation is to pilot one to three new programs—or expand the current pilots if appropriate—that would include not only business, colleges, and high school partners, but also the University of Wyoming, the adult education sector, the DWS, the Department of Employment, the WDC, and the WBC.

ACTION STEPS

- Partner with the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, Workforce Development Council, and Wyoming Business Council to identify emerging industries they have targeted for development and leverage available federal and state resources to support workforce development, education, and training initiatives. Hold a biennial meeting of the WCCC, colleges, and industry stakeholders to determine how the system will address emerging industries and workforce trends.

- Pilot one to three P–16 career pathways. Ensure all partners are involved in the planning and implementation efforts, including the K–12 education system, the University of Wyoming, the WCCC, and workforce and economic development agencies and organizations.

STRATEGY 4.2.

Place programs at appropriate locations throughout the state to ensure that Wyoming can meet the labor market demands for targeted occupations.

A statewide approach to meeting workforce demands will necessitate a method for identifying how many programs are needed and where those programs should be located. The collaborative work undertaken with workforce and economic development partners as part of Strategy 4.1 will help colleges determine the level of state and regional labor market demand. Colleges already work hand-in-hand with their Advisory Committees to specify the skills required for employees to be successful in industries and occupations. A next step will require colleges to obtain information from industry experts to inform the WCCC about where programs are likely to be most successful around the state. The WCCC will need this information, along with other resources, to make decisions about in which communities the programs should be located.

ACTION STEPS

- Solicit recommendations from Advisory Committees, economic and workforce development agencies, and industry representatives to help determine where programs would be most successful within the state.

- Use the program approval criteria described in Strategic Objective 6 to make decisions about the number and location of new programs for targeted occupations.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

Partnerships

Support economic development through partnerships with local and statewide business and industry, government and education agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.



Wyoming has a

strong tradition of public-private partnerships. According to the 2007 *Annual Partnership Report*, community colleges have established myriad "mutually beneficial partnerships" with business, government, other education sectors, and among the colleges themselves that promote positive educational and community outcomes across the state (WCCC 2008a). This

ability to form effective partnerships is one of Wyoming's strengths, and the state should continue to expand and support partnership activities.

Partnerships between community colleges and local business and industry are particularly strong. Employers look to their local community college as the primary resource for education and training, as a cultural center that helps retain talented employees, and as an economic asset that can attract and serve new businesses.

STRATEGY 5.1.
Expand current partnerships with business and industry.

Wyoming policymakers have expressed great interest in diversifying the state's economic interests. Greater economic diversity is believed to soften the resulting economic blow if one major industry takes a downturn (Federal Reserve Bank of New York 2002). According to Mark Harris of the Wyoming Department of Employment, economic diversification could be beneficial to the state, provided growth happens in industries that "offer higher wages" (Harris 2002).

Community colleges play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining new industries and business to their local communities and the state. Interviews with business representatives across the state reinforced the importance of community colleges in supporting local training and providing new employees with access to further education and cultural events, even in the most rural areas of the state.

Industry representatives have been very generous with their time, serving on local college Advisory Councils to identify appropriate curricula and skill outcomes for students in college programs. This type of activity has been highly beneficial, but has occurred primarily at a local level. The plan's recommendation is to expand those activities, both in breadth at the local level—covering more college programs—and in depth at the state level—incorporating statewide Advisory Committees into the system's planning strategies. The primary focus should be on creating opportunities for expanding partnerships with workforce and economic development partners.

In the short term, the WCCC is asked to work closely with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), the Workforce Development Council (WDC), the Wyoming Business Council (WBC), and the Department of Employment to identify opportunities for funding workforce training programs. The colleges' rapid response to local opportunities is a cornerstone of their service to their communities. The DWS and the WDC are linked to opportunities through the Bureau of Labor, the Workforce Investment Act, and other sources that could be potential resources for college workforce programs. The WCCC and the DWS can collaborate to identify a systematic means of sharing opportunities and ideas to take advantage of the potential workforce opportunities that exist through the DWS.

ACTION STEPS

- Document use of local and statewide Advisory Committees for career and technical education and workforce training programs.
- Develop a plan for using Advisory Committees for multiple purposes in community college regions and across the state.
- Identify opportunities to fund non-credit workforce training programs to support rapid response to workforce development opportunities. Actively partner with the Department of Workforce Services, the Workforce Development Council, the

Wyoming Business Council, and the Department of Employment to identify and respond to opportunities and reinforce the community colleges' role as a primary resource for workforce training.

STRATEGY 5.2.
Identify and develop new ways to share data and information with other state agencies and organizations.

Several states have taken steps to integrate the data collected within different state agencies to improve the services the state provides to its residents. Many of these efforts focus on improving workforce development systems through shared performance measures and a common repository for information. The best example of such a system is in Florida, where the state is able to follow the progress of residents who receive services through many different agencies, including K–12, community colleges and universities, workforce, health and human services, and employment agencies. Florida, along with five other states—Michigan, Montana, Oregon, Texas, and Washington—developed a "blueprint" that recommends performance measures and an information system that would support consistency in performance measures within the state and for federal workforce programs (Wilson 2005).

While Wyoming has work to do to ensure comprehensive data systems exist for its individual partners first, a system that would allow data to be shared across agencies could prove a valuable tool for providing effective and efficient services to residents.

ACTION STEP

- Partner in ongoing efforts to establish shared data and information systems among public sector agencies and educational institutions, including the Departments of Employment, Workforce Services, Education, and Health, and the WCCC and the University of Wyoming.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6

Coordination and Collaboration

Improve system efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced communication and coordination.



The state of Wyoming

funds 50 percent or more of community college programs, depending on the college. Under the current system, individual colleges propose program and capital construction needs to the WCCC, which then weighs and compares funding needs across colleges. To target state funding more effectively, this strategic plan calls for close collaboration among the colleges in determining funding priorities and supplying data-based evidence for how the priorities serve

state interests. In turn, criteria used by the WCCC to set funding priorities must be made transparent and be adhered to closely. For the decision-making process to succeed, trust, understanding, and respect among the colleges and the WCCC are essential.

Working as a system presents a number of opportunities for Wyoming's community colleges to function more efficiently and effectively. To these ends, it will be necessary to improve communication and collaboration between those at the local and state levels and seek to centralize some system operations.

STRATEGY 6.1.
Promote shared policy development and decision making and improve collaboration among WCCC Commissioners, WCCC staff, and the colleges.

Close collaboration among the WCCC and the community colleges is fundamental to serving the state's students and the state's interests. Because the WCCC is responsible for decisions about a wide range of policy issues affecting each college, it should develop a way for representatives of the colleges' senior staff and Boards of Trustees to interact with the Commissioners and provide information and recommendations as part of the policy-making process. The WCCC document titled *Wyoming Community College Commission Policy on Consultation* (2008c), adopted in 2008, should serve as the basis for organizing how the colleges can share information and opinions with the WCCC. The councils outlined therein will meet to share information about specific policy areas, debate policy options, and make informed recommendations to the broader Commission.

Two areas requiring collaboration among the WCCC and the colleges will be the approval of new programs[12] and capital construction. Through this strategic planning process, the Advisory Council, WCCC, senior college administrators, and other stakeholders have contributed to developing criteria for the WCCC to apply to proposals for new programs and facilities. To help the WCCC use these criteria, MPR Associates developed evaluation tools for the Commission to use to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each type of proposal. For each criterion, the tools include a number of related questions, examples of evidence the colleges may include in the proposal that would be germane to each criterion, and a three-point rubric corresponding to low, medium, and high scores. These tools have been reviewed by Advisory Council members, Task Force members, community college administrators, and Wyoming Community College Commissioners, but until they are used, they cannot be refined to the degree desired to ensure their reliability. Ideally, college leaders and the WCCC members will jointly continue to develop and refine the criteria and evaluation tools through iterative use.

Also, it is important to note that the evaluation tools should be used by college leaders as they prepare submissions so that summary information addressing each of the criteria can be submitted, thus facilitating the review process for the WCCC. It should not be the task of the WCCC to search for information to determine whether the submission meets each of the criteria.

In addition, the WCCC may decide that some of the criteria should be given greater weight than

[12] New programs will adhere to NCES's National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) definition for a credit program: the program includes at least three months or 300 clock hours of instruction and can be applied toward a certification or academic degree (Wei et al. 2009).

others or that they would weigh more heavily in the decision-making process, and should determine which deserve the greatest weight. They will also need to determine benchmarks or summary ratings that would result in approval, requests for additional information, or disapproval. These evaluation tools are included in Appendix A.

When a program is submitted for approval, the WCCC will review the following general areas:

- State Interests
- Labor Needs
- Curriculum Development
- Pathways
- Faculty Support
- Recruitment Strategies
- Resource Needs

The WCCC will evaluate capital construction requests against the broad areas described below. As mentioned above, see Appendix A for greater detail on the evaluation tools.

- State Interests
- Community Support
- Existing Facilities
- Safety and ADA Requirements
- Sustainability

The plan also recommends that the WCCC develop a feedback system, so that colleges whose programs or facilities have not been approved may receive constructive guidance for improving future proposals.

ACTION STEPS

- Use the Consultation Agreement as defined.
- Use the strategic plan criteria for new program approval based on state interests.
- Use the strategic plan criteria for capital construction approval based on state interests.

STRATEGY 6.2.
Implement processes to improve system efficiency and reduce unnecessary redundancy.

The WCCC is well positioned to view the seven colleges as an entire system and use that vantage point to make decisions to improve its efficiency. One approach to improving efficiency is to centralize at the system level some of the operations currently managed at each campus, for example, the payroll system. In recent years, other postsecondary education systems and government entities have been consolidating this function, and colleges' operational heads also have considered this idea. Some have supported this policy, while others have been against it, as explained below.

The University System of Georgia is an example of a postsecondary system that has shifted toward a centralized payroll in the last two years. The Board of Regents adopted a "shared services strategy" for this consolidation, bringing payroll responsibilities together at a shared services center overseen by representatives from the member schools rather than system leaders. Expected benefits of this centralization included the following:

- Streamlining of data entry work by an estimated 40 percent.
- Lowered risk of error by building in redundancy in sensitive function areas.
- Upgrade of the system using the latest technology.
- Simplification of financial reporting.
- Standardization of policies and procedures to reduce variability and errors.
- Implementation of best practices.

Those involved in this payroll centralization plan in Georgia also worked to allay fears about the process, indicating that individual campuses should maintain their own banking and finance systems and that it would not be necessary to cen-

tralize all campus accounts into one bank account (University System of Georgia 2008; Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia 2008). Other systems, including those at the University of Wisconsin, State University of New York, and University of Maryland, have recently undertaken payroll consolidation.

There are several concerns that the WCCC would need to address before seriously considering payroll centralization. A discussion among the operational heads of Wyoming's community colleges about payroll centralization yielded a list of issues to consider. Many wondered whether the savings associated with reducing on-campus staff would be overshadowed by the cost of creating and maintaining a central office. Others questioned how much on-campus staffing could be reduced, as they expected data entry, quality checking, and reporting to continue at each site. Concerns about a loss of flexibility and responsiveness at the local level were also common. In addition, some worried that consolidating and reconciling different structures, such as benefits, would be very difficult across all sites.

For the purposes of this strategic plan, payroll is simply an example of an administrative function that the WCCC should investigate for potential centralization. While many entities, educational and otherwise, are moving toward consolidating payroll, ultimately, the question of which operations would yield the greatest savings for Wyoming upon consolidation deserves more careful study.

Another opportunity for the community colleges to centralize an operational function may reside in the financial aid offices. As an example, the Connecticut Community Colleges recently devised an innovative approach to saving money through centralization while maintaining, or even improving, site-level service to students. Rather than centralizing the financial aid offices, the system leaders in Connecticut created a small system-level office that would take on some of the more routine tasks that had been conducted at each site, such as verifying student information, facilitating audits, and staying up-to-date with changing regulations and policies. The individual sites maintained their financial aid offices, and site-level staff had more time to do the work required at the individual level: helping students through the application process, advising students of their options, and reaching out to students in the high schools (Supiano 2009). This type of centralization also warrants further exploration by Wyoming's community colleges.

ACTION STEP

- Identify and pursue opportunities to automate and centralize selected college operational functions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7

Adequate Resources

Provide adequate resources, given available funds, distributed in a way that promotes quality and positive student outcomes.



According to the

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2009), Wyoming is one of only three states not facing a budget shortfall in 2009. Nevertheless, Wyoming's economy has contracted, leaving fewer resources available to fund public programs. While no public organization can or should expect to be immune to changes in economic conditions, education is one of a few state investments that provides both short- and long-term payoffs. Community colleges, along with K–12 schools and the University of Wyoming, should be seen as a solution

to economic challenges. Wyoming community colleges must partner with state policymakers to ensure that students and colleges are adequately supported and that funds are invested wisely.

STRATEGY 7.1.
Ensure that the colleges have and maintain adequate facilities aligned with the statewide strategic plan.

The state recently took a step toward becoming a partner in community college capital construction. Legislation passed in March 2009 directs the WCCC to "identify community college building needs, develop a prioritized list of community college capital construction projects and forward recommendations for community college capital construction projects to the state building commission" (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009). In addition, the WCCC already has responsibility for submitting major maintenance requests to the Legislature each year. While the economy has tightened since this change to capital construction funding was proposed, it is essential that Wyoming have a process for requesting and setting priorities for capital construction projects in anticipation of greater state funding in the future.

Under Wyoming statute 21-18-202(d)(iv), the Legislature must approve all new capital construction projects in excess of $50,000 for which state funds are or could be eventually applied. According to the statue, "New capital construction projects" include the following:

> New construction, renovation, and capital renewal in excess of $50,000 market value that is not necessary maintenance or repair; and
>
> The acquisition of real property in excess of $50,000 market value whether by purchase or exchange (WCCC 2008f).

Colleges must also inform the WCCC of any new non-state-funded capital construction projects they are undertaking. Many buildings, even those built with funds from sources other than the state, are eligible for state support through major maintenance funds; therefore, the WCCC must be aware of their construction.

The state expects local colleges and communities to play a role in any capital construction project. According to the WCCC *Facilities Handbook*, "In order for projects to be recommended for funding by the WCCC, a minimum of the dollar equivalent of six-tenths of one percent (0.6%) of the applicant district's assessed valuation (at the time of application), not to exceed fifty percent (50%) of the total project cost (at the time of application), shall come from non-state sources" (WCCC 2008f). Colleges may use a variety of non-state sources, including voter-approved levies, revenue bond issues, gifts, endowments, federal appropriations, and other sources.

Colleges need sufficient lead time to plan for future building projects. Currently, statute requires the WCCC to set priorities for capital construction projects annually, although it takes longer than a year to identify new facility needs, craft building plans, and develop a funding proposal. If projects are prioritized each year, a college that was high on the list one year and has invested the time and resources to initiate a bond campaign and move forward with building preparations may be moved to the bottom of the list the subsequent year. This plan's recommendation is to provide a two-year window for prioritizing capital construction projects, which will also require a change to community college statute.

Wyoming offers student housing at each college, reflecting the state's rural nature. When students move to another town to pursue further education, they need safe and reliable housing close to

campus. Legislators disagree about the appropriateness of using state funds for student housing at the community colleges. However, offering housing to students and their families, in some cases, makes it possible for students outside a local community to attend and enroll in a particular educational program. The state has directed the colleges and the WCCC to avoid any unnecessary duplication of programs across the seven colleges. However, if a program is offered in only one or two places, many students who wish to complete that program will eventually have to move closer to the college that offers it. Colleges are working to offer more programs and more parts of programs online, but there may always be a component of some programs that must be learned in class. An example might be Eastern Wyoming College's Veterinary Technology program. Many of the required science, mathematics, and general education courses can be taken online, but students are required to attend Eastern to work hands-on with animals to successfully complete that degree. Safe and affordable rentals are not widely available in every college community, so student housing serves as a support to students pursuing their educational goals. This plan's recommendation is that the WCCC consider student housing proposals when crafting the capital construction priority list each biennium.

In addition to facilities, colleges must have adequate equipment to support the programs they offer. Equipment must be in safe working order and reflect current technologies so that students are well-prepared for the workforce. Colleges must also have libraries and laboratories that offer students access to the most current information and technologies.

Community colleges require adequate, safe, and appropriate facilities for their courses and programs, including classroom-based academic and resource-intensive career and technical education classes. The following section provides recommendations regarding the need to ensure that facilities and equipment are maintained and updated to reflect current technologies for teaching and learning.

ACTION STEPS

- Prioritize capital construction projects once each biennium so that colleges have time to plan for the future.
- Change state statute to allow biennial prioritization of community college capital construction projects.
- Consider student housing proposals as part of the capital construction prioritization process.
- Identify funding each biennium for upgrades to equipment needed for college programs that meet state needs and strategic objectives.

STRATEGY 7.2.
Employ sustainable and comprehensive funding mechanisms that recognize the multiple functions and roles of community colleges.

Education is the engine of Wyoming's economic development. Elementary and secondary education, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming enable residents to become productive members of the community and the workforce. Community colleges must be especially agile and responsive to the needs of business and industry as well as to educational trends, such as increasing or declining enrollments.

Nationally, community colleges are experiencing an explosion in enrollment. Much of the change is attributed to the downturn in the economy and

the high unemployment rates. Several colleges in Wyoming report they have seen higher enrollments in the last year, which has resulted in the colleges needing to stretch existing resources to support the additional students. Funds dedicated to supporting enrollment growth, including additional faculty, more course sections, and increased use of college support services, will allow colleges to continue serving Wyoming residents who want to acquire new skills.

Wyoming community colleges are investing significant resources in new programs to meet emerging workforce and industry needs each year. This report calls for the Legislature's help in setting aside special purpose funding[13] to support innovative programs that are closely aligned with the state interests and strategic objectives outlined in this plan. Special purpose funds are designed to be flexible, allowing the WCCC leeway in determining what the primary needs are from year to year and in designing criteria for awarding the funds. For example, in one year, there might be a recognized need to increase the number of registered nurses in a relatively short period of time. In another year, there might be a need to encourage cross-sector efforts that promote transfer to four-year colleges. In both of these scenarios, the WCCC must have the flexibility to identify what is currently important and design application and approval criteria that address those priorities.

Like many states, Wyoming's community college funding allocation formula focuses primarily on funding past full-time-equivalent (FTE) enrollment. This approach highlights the importance of wide access in the mission of community colleges. However, student success is an equally important mission, one that is ignored by a formula that distributes funding solely on past enrollments. Incorporating elements that recognize student outcomes and program quality in the formula will allow funding to more closely follow the priorities that are essential to the colleges and the system as a whole. Strategic Objective 8 provides additional detail about the need for such data.

An important consideration when making any changes to the funding allocation formula is the need for a sustainable formula. Colleges must be able to rely on a formula that does not change substantially every year, and that provides a stable and predictable view of state allocations. Major changes to the formula, including the introduction of performance and quality measures, should be made with careful consideration and timed so that colleges are not left scrambling to alter their plans based on changing revenues. A sustainable formula is one that is flexible and allows for periodic review, but provides the colleges the ability to plan into the future and predict what their revenues will look like from year to year.

ACTION STEPS

- Provide funds to address the costs of enrollment growth on a biennial basis.
- Help the colleges get and maintain resources through special purpose funding for innovative college programs aligned with the statewide strategic plan. Assist in identifying the start-up costs of developing and implementing new programs.
- In the future, introduce additional elements to the state community college funding formula that emphasize student success and program quality. Access is currently the priority reflected in the funding formula's focus on FTE enrollment in credit programs.

[13] Under Chapter 211, *Community College Amendments* (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009), "[t]he commission may by exception budget, request additional state funding to be designated as special purpose funding, accounted for and distributed separately from distributions under the funding allocation model."

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8

System of Continuous Improvement

Emphasize accountability and student success.



Federal and local

funds for community colleges have always been accompanied by expectations for performance, accountability, and proof of return on investment. Federal requirements have been more formal, requiring colleges to comply with reporting requirements and specific data requests, through legislation like the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and the Workforce Investment Act Title II adult education and literacy programs (Julian

and Smith 2007). Local accountability is often more informal, demonstrated by trustee board elections, editorials in local papers, and the passage of bond measures. In recent years, colleges have received the message that they must find new and more transparent ways to demonstrate their impact on students and communities and their response to local, state, and national needs for education and workforce training (Julian and Smith 2007; U.S. Department of Education 2006a; Walleri 1997). This section presents a discussion of the role of accountability and how it can be expanded to promote program improvement and student success.

STRATEGY 8.1.
Build a statewide longitudinal data system for community colleges.

Setting goals to enhance educational outcomes such as increasing skills for adult basic education students; promoting higher rates of graduation, licensure, and certification; improving employment placement rates; and enhancing services to vulnerable and underserved populations will not be fruitful until they are informed by consistent, reliable longitudinal community college data (Data Quality Campaign 2006). Many states use the NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to obtain outcomes data for their students. IPEDS is not a comprehensive tool for community colleges, however. Its outcomes data are about first-time/full-time, degree-seeking freshmen in public two-year colleges, who represent roughly one-third of community college students and are primarily recent high school graduates. Wyoming's comprehensive community colleges serve many students who attend part-time, who are returning to postsecondary education after a long absence, or who are seeking to improve their occupational and educational skills. Without a state-level longitudinal data system, Wyoming lacks reliable information for understanding the challenges and successes of adult basic education, part-time attendance, and students in workforce training programs. Without a longitudinal database, the state has limited understanding of how all students move in and out of the community college system and if they achieve their educational goals over time.

Wyoming has recognized the need for shared and consistent data collection and reporting and has taken some steps toward developing a more comprehensive community college data system. Each college now uses Datatel® to store its campus financial, student, and course information, although each college's database set-up is slightly different. The WCCC also has some access to those databases to obtain limited information when needed. Simply sharing a common database platform, however, is not the same as having access to an integrated, longitudinal state data system that can be used for research and to evaluate and improve student and institutional outcomes.

With its system-wide vantage point, the WCCC is well-positioned to provide guidance and recommendations to improve efficiency in collecting comparable data. As much as possible, program and funding decisions should be rooted in current data that are comparable across the colleges. This plan, therefore, presents recommendations for developing a statewide, longitudinal community college data system. A common system for transmitting equivalent data from each site, managed and maintained by experts on the WCCC staff, would go far in ensuring that comparable data are assembled from each campus. Such a system also would support accountability reporting to policymakers and the public. Installing a statewide longitudinal data system, housed at the WCCC, would not be without cost, and an initial cost assessment of such a system is recommended to ensure it will be designed, implemented, and maintained as efficiently as possible.

MPR also recommends that the state explore the possibility of a cross-sector longitudinal data warehouse, one that houses information from students in K–12 schools, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming. Such a system will allow the state to understand how students move from one education sector to another, where resources can be targeted to support the greatest needs, and where students are encountering barriers to their progress and success.

ACTION STEPS

- Determine the cost of a data warehouse (DW) that could house unit-level data for all community college students, including credit and non-credit students.
- Continue to collaborate on collection and submission of appropriate college- and student-level data while a DW is being assessed and implemented.
- Install a DW at the WCCC that can house and maintain a state community college longitudinal dataset.
- Ensure that WCCC staff have the database and research expertise to maintain and use data effectively and to distribute funding based on results to improve student and institutional outcomes.
- Require colleges to submit unit-level enrollment, student, course, and financial data each term and annually to populate the longitudinal database.
- Create a state longitudinal data system that links K–12 schools, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming.

STRATEGY 8.2.
Develop an accountability system that allows the WCCC and the colleges to demonstrate return on the state's investment.

Accountability is the concept most frequently invoked when postsecondary providers talk about demonstrating their efficacy, particularly following the release of the 2006 U.S. Department of Education report titled *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education.* Accountability measures designed to meet the information needs of the public are essential in helping colleges and community college systems tell their story clearly.

Some community college systems, including Wyoming's, are encountering new or increased state expectations for proof of performance, and providing this information is challenging for some college personnel. Although Wyoming's colleges were formed in response to local demand, using local funds and maintained with local support, the proportion of state funding and support has grown in recent years, accounting for more and more of the system's funding in recent biennia. In the 1999–2000 academic year, state funds for community colleges totaled just over $93.2 million, but by 2007–08, state support had more than doubled to $189.6 million (WCCC n.d.-b). As a result, state policymakers, who must be responsible stewards of public funds, are asking for more detailed evidence regarding the return on the state's investment in community colleges.

Chapter 211, Section 21-18-202, of Wyoming statute (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009) mandates that the WCCC:

develop performance benchmarks, outcome measures and other performance indicators which serve as the basis for annual reporting to the legislature and the governor … including but not limited to:

(A) Student goal attainment and retention;
(B) Student persistence;
(C) Degree and certificate completion rates;
(D) Placement rate of graduates in the workforce;
(E) Licensure and certification pass rates;
(F) Demonstration of critical literacy skills;
(G) Success in subsequent, related coursework; and
(H) Number and rate of students who transfer.

Additional measures that could assist the colleges in understanding their effectiveness include the following:

(A) Student satisfaction;
(B) Employer satisfaction;
(C) Instructor effectiveness/student learning;
(D) Return on investment to the individual student; and
(E) Return on investment to the taxpayer.

The legislation also directs the WCCC to "attach performance indicators to funding to achieve established results" (Sixtieth Legislature of the State of Wyoming 2009). Neither of these directives can be effectively implemented without a statewide, unit-level, longitudinal data system, as outlined in Strategy 8.1. Currently, data reported for these indicators are calculated at the college level, and there is no evidence that these data are comparable across institutions. In addition, student persistence and goal attainment can only be captured within a single college, although undoubtedly some students are transferring among Wyoming community colleges and to the University of Wyoming (Maggard 2008). Without a way to follow the progress of individual students and student cohorts over time, the state has only the most general measures of student persistence and attainment in higher education.

Wyoming will also need to develop clear and concise ways of sharing their accountability and performance indicators with different audiences, including policymakers, students, and the public. Several states have developed systems for reporting statistical information and accountability data in concise and clear formats. Several examples of existing reporting systems in these states include the following:

Minnesota's "Accountability Dashboard" is an interactive Web-based system that allows policymakers, administrators, and the public to view progress on selected accountability measures at any point in time. Results can be viewed through many different lenses, including at the system level and for each individual institution. Viewers can consult the dashboard for an overview of progress or delve deeper to look at numbers and trends for individual indicators. For more information, see http://www.mnscu.edu/board/accountability/index.html.

Florida produces an annual "Fact Book" focused primarily on statistical information about its community colleges, including enrollment and completion data, employee and financial information, and library usage (Florida Department of Education 2009). For more information, see http://www.fldoehub.org/CCTCMIS/c/Pages/default.aspx.

Colorado provides an annual "Sourcebook" that includes institutional statistics, funding data, performance results, and profiles of signature programs (Colorado Community College System 2008). For more information, see http://www.cccs.edu/Communications/sourcebook.html.

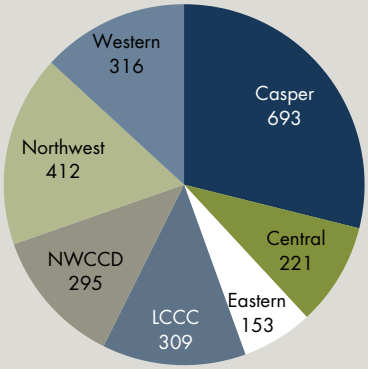
Wyoming Community College Persistence, Completion, and Student Characteristics Data

During the development of this strategic plan, the WCCC and colleges acknowledged the importance and benefits of accountability measures and a statewide longitudinal database, particularly in support of the full and effective implementation of this strategic plan. In response, the colleges collected and reported to MPR aggregated data regarding persistence, completion, and several student characteristics (see Exhibits 30–37). The data were, however, only for students who enrolled for the first time at a community college as full-time students, meaning that all part-time and non-credit students were excluded from this particular analysis of student outcomes. In addition, the use of aggregate data does not allow researchers to explore the factors that contribute to positive or negative student outcomes, including institutional factors—size of college, tuition and fee levels, and expenditures per student—as well as individual factors—working full-time while enrolled, support of a family, parenting, and income (Bailey et al. 2005).

It is important to note that first-time, full-time students constitute a small proportion of the students who enroll at Wyoming community colleges. While completion and persistence rates for this cohort are helpful measures of success, it is not possible under the current data collection and reporting system to look at outcomes for all the other students who attend a Wyoming community college. The community college student population is quite diverse in age and income, with many holding a job or raising a family while attending school. Levels of academic preparedness also vary, presenting challenges for some students attempting to complete community college programs. Many students attend less than full-time. And, finally, not all students attending community colleges intend to continue or receive degrees: many come for personal enrichment, to gain specific skills, or to improve their employment prospects.

Exhibit 30 displays the number of first-time, full-time students who were enrolled in Wyoming community colleges in fall 2003. Casper College had the highest number enrolled, with 693 students.

EXHIBIT 30.
Number of First-Time, Full-Time Students Enrolled in Wyoming Community Colleges: Fall 2003



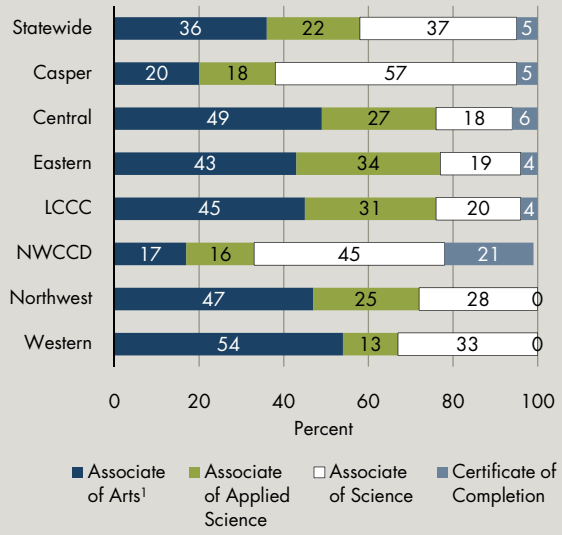
SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

Exhibit 31 displays the academic area in which first-time, full-time students enrolled in fall 2003. With the exception of the Northern Wyoming Community College District, certificates of completion represented less than 10 percent of declared enrollments in 2003. Each college has a slightly different mix of program enrollments, reflecting the different interests of their students and the mix of programs offered by the colleges.

Among fall 2003 first-time, full-time enrolled students, more than half at each college had either graduated by summer 2004 or were still enrolled in fall 2004 (Exhibit 32). Western Wyoming Community College had the highest percentage of returning students and graduates, with 74 percent.

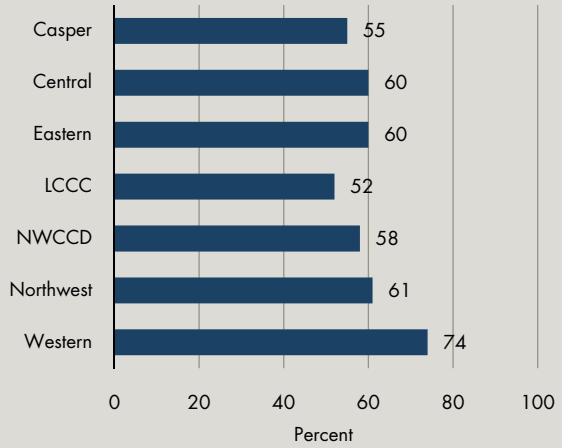
Fall 2003 first-time, full-time students made substantial progress toward completing their stated goals by the end of summer 2008 (Exhibit 33). More

EXHIBIT 31.
Percentage Distribution of First-Time, Full-Time Students Enrolled in Various Academic Programs at Time of Enrollment: Fall 2003



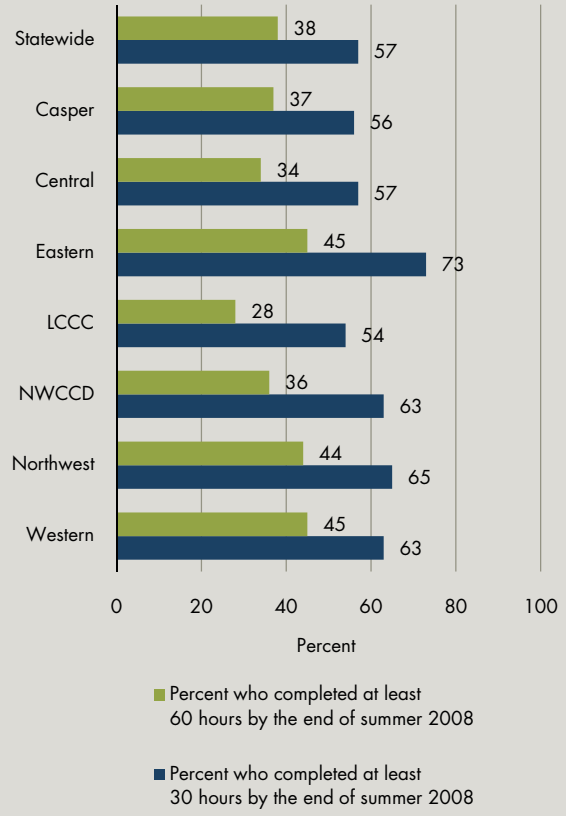
[1] Associate of Arts includes Associate of Fine Arts; Associate of Science includes Associate of Business.
SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

EXHIBIT 32.
Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Graduated by End of Summer 2004 or Were Still Enrolled in Fall 2004



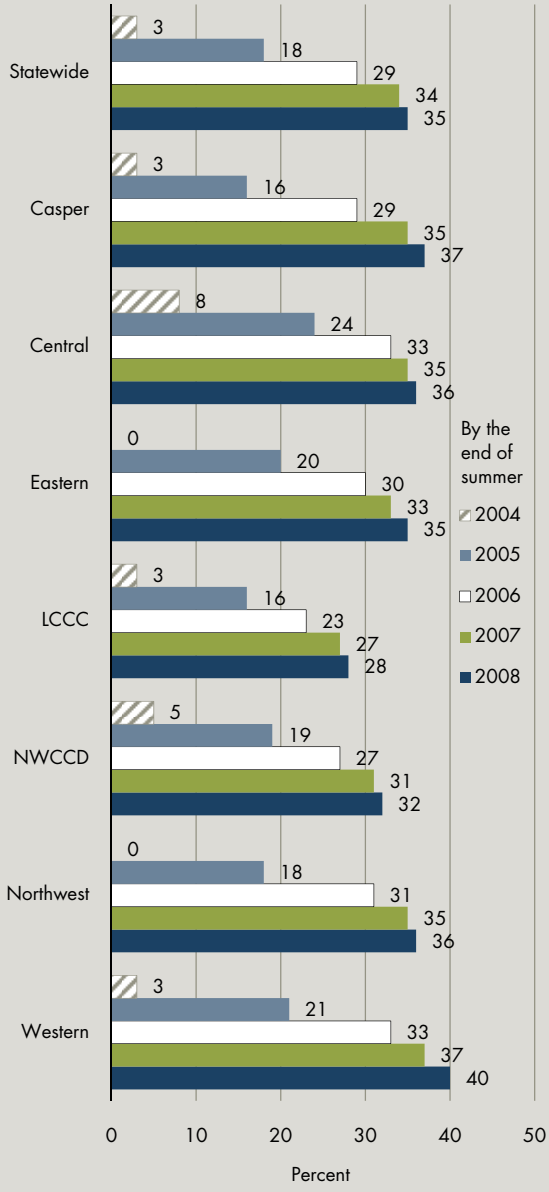
SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

EXHIBIT 33.
Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Made Progress Toward Completing a Degree or Certificate by Summer 2008



SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

EXHIBIT 34.
Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Completed a Degree or Certificate Within Four Years



NOTE: Percentages are cumulative (i.e., total percentage of completions by end of summer 2008 includes the completions from each prior year).
SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

than 50 percent of students at seven colleges had earned at least 30 hours of instruction by then. And across the state, nearly 40 percent of students had completed 60 or more hours.

According to the data provided by the Wyoming community colleges, very few students earn a degree or certificate in the year they first enroll (Exhibit 34). In most colleges, less than 5 percent of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students earned a degree or certificate in their first year. There was, however, a large gain in the number of degrees and certificates earned once another year had passed. By the end of 2005, more than 15 percent of students at

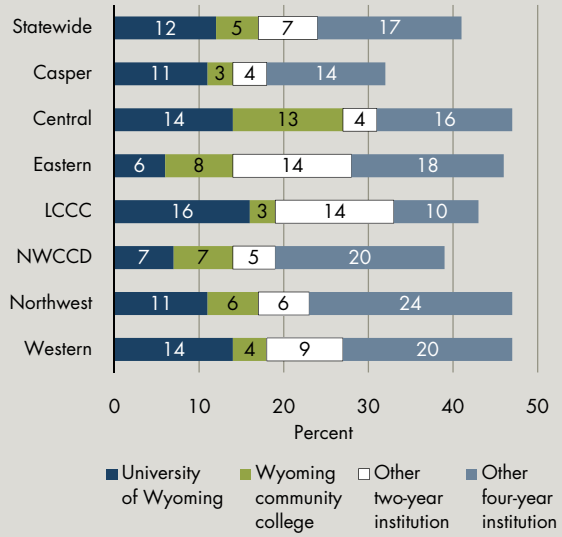
every college had earned a degree or certificate. And by the end of 2008, 35 percent of students statewide had earned a degree or certificate. These data show the trend toward students taking longer than a year or two to complete a certificate or degree.

Exhibit 35 shows that the largest proportion of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students who transferred to another postsecondary institution by summer 2008 enrolled in a four-year institution other than the University of Wyoming. A very small proportion, 5 percent statewide, transferred to another Wyoming community college. Central Wyoming College had the highest proportion of intra-system transfers, with 13 percent. More than 40 percent of fall 2003 students transferred to another institution to continue their education by the end of summer 2008.

The vast majority of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students were between the ages of 17 and 24 (Exhibit 36). Notable exceptions were at Eastern Wyoming College and Western Wyoming Community College, where only 64 percent and 34 percent of students, respectively, were between the ages of 17 and 24. Western is the only college where more than half (56 percent) of students were between the ages of 25 and 29.

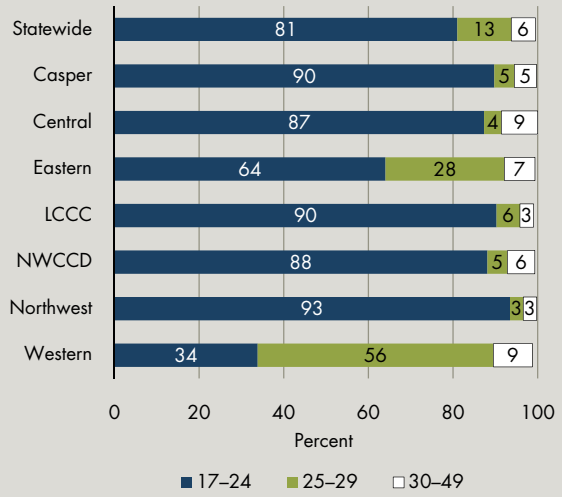
More than one-third of fall 2003 first-time, full-time students were awarded a Pell Grant to assist them with paying for their education (Exhibit 37). Pell

EXHIBIT 35.
Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Transferred to Another Postsecondary Institution by Summer 2008



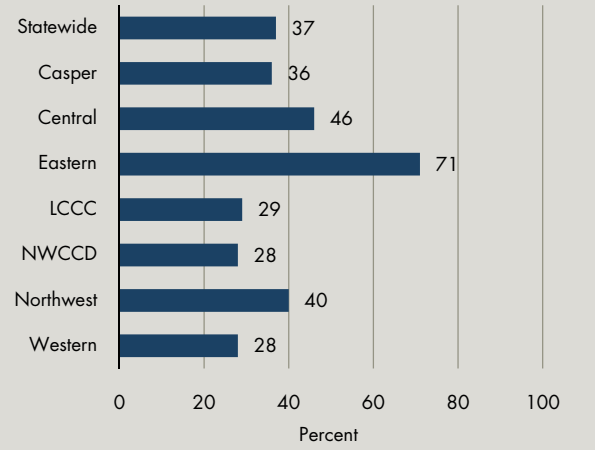
SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

EXHIBIT 36.
Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Community College Students, by Their Age



NOTE: Students of unknown age, under age 17, and over age 50 are not represented on this graph. Both students of unknown age and those under age 17 represented less than half of 1 percent of total first-time, full-time students at each college. Students over age 50 represented 1 percent or less of first-time, full-time enrollment at each college.
SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

EXHIBIT 37.
Percentage of Fall 2003 First-Time, Full-Time Students Who Were Awarded a Pell Grant



SOURCE: Data provided by the Wyoming community colleges.

Grants are awarded to very needy students, indicating that Wyoming community colleges are serving many students who need substantial financial assistance in order to attend community college and pursue their educational goals.

ACTION STEPS

- Identify additional indicators that demonstrate the state's return on its investment.
- Develop an annual report detailing statistical information and accountability results statewide and by college and make it available to policymakers and the public.

STRATEGY 8.3.
Use data to promote student success and program improvement.

While accountability gets substantial attention, it is only one part of a comprehensive approach to improvement. A comprehensive system takes into account not only what policymakers and the public need to know, but also what colleges and universities must learn so that they can improve educational programs and student outcomes. This is where "actionable" data come in—information that can be used to understand trends and patterns and then to encourage appropriate changes.

A system of continuous improvement that is focused on promoting student success and program improvement has three linked elements:

1. **Accountability**—to students, policymakers, internal and external stakeholders, and the public;
2. **Evaluation**—of programs and services to ensure that the state, colleges, and workforce partners are continually engaged in monitoring their initiatives, decisions, and plans; and
3. **Program Improvement**—ensuring that data are used actively, at state and local levels, to promote student success and improve the services available to students and communities.

A multi-tier approach to performance management gives states the flexibility to design high-level accountability measures to report succinct information to policymakers and the public, as well as to develop other performance indicators to answer very specific questions.

The most effective measures of student success and program improvement are developed through a collaborative effort, involving educators, administrators, industry, and government to identify what is important and how it should be measured. Wyoming has work to do to identify "what counts as success, who is counted, and for how long" (Jaschik 2008). This plan identifies issues to consider as Wyoming begins to refine its performance approach so that it represents a complete range of the state's interests and priorities.[14]

Establishing Wyoming's View of Student Success

The community college system will need to define its view of student success. Relying on the federal formula for graduation rates—first-time, full-time students who graduate within three years—provides only a partial picture of the successes students experience from a community college education. There are three initial questions to consider:

1. Which students are included when looking at success? Are they only first-time, full-time? What about adult basic education students, part-timers, and short-term workforce training students?
2. What is counted as a success? Is it transfer to another institution; completion of a credential, including those earned through external licensing and certification agencies; earning grades that indicate students are progressing toward completion of a goal; skill gains for adult edu-

[14] As noted in Strategy 8.1, this approach can only be fully implemented when a statewide, unit-level, longitudinal data system is in place.

cation students; employment; employer satisfaction?
3. How long does it take students—not just first-time, full-time students—to succeed?

Identifying Measures

Once the state has decided what it wants to count as a success, who will be counted, and how long students need to be followed to identify whether they are successful, it can then begin identifying measures that tell a story of student success, and failure, within individual colleges and across the state.

1. **Persistence**—Analyzing whether students continue along their educational path from one term to the next and one year to the next.
2. **Progress**—Determining if students meet milestones that indicate they are progressing along their educational path. Milestones could include grades, completing ESL, or fulfilling developmental education requirements. The Community College Research Center defines milestones as "measurable educational achievements that include both conventional terminal completions, such as earning a credential or transferring to a baccalaureate program, and intermediate outcomes, such as completing developmental education or adult basic education requirements" (Leinbach and Jenkins 2008).
3. **Momentum**—What makes a difference in whether students achieve milestones? The Community College Research Center has identified "momentum points," which are "measurable educational attainments that are empirically correlated with the completion of a milestone" (Leinbach and Jenkins 2008). Specific momentum points should be targeted to Wyoming and its colleges, although some examples might be particular courses (such as introductory or gate-keeper mathematics and English classes), a certain number of credits earned by a specific point in time, or completing a series of courses (Calcagno et al. 2007).
4. **Completion**—Do students earn certificates or degrees? How long did it take for most students to complete a degree or certificate?
5. **Transfer**—Do students transfer to other postsecondary institutions in Wyoming or in other states? And do students generally obtain a degree or certificate before they transfer to a four-year university?
6. **Placement**—Are students employed after leaving the institution? Are their wages higher than they were prior to college enrollment? Are employers satisfied with the skills and knowledge of former students?

This plan's recommendation is that the WCCC and colleges collaborate to identify, design, and implement measures of student success and college effectiveness. Measures should be designed with improvement in mind, and the system must respond to the performance results, even when those results cause discomfort. New information gleaned through this effort may challenge long-held assumptions and may highlight the need to change the traditional ways of doing business. A 2006 report titled *Act on Fact* describes the concept of a "culture of evidence" arguing that by "establishing an institutional expectation that individual and collective actions *typically* will be prompted and supported by data," community colleges can enact real change even though resources may be scarce (Community College Survey of Student Engagement 2008, p. 6).

The following are hallmarks of a culture of evidence:

Institutional research and information systems provide systematic, useful, user-friendly, and timely data regarding students' persistence, learning, and attainment.

A culture that encourages staff, students, administrators, and boards to carefully review and discuss results.

Tracking of student cohorts to understand rates of attainment and identify what needs improvement.

Regular collection, analysis, and reporting of data about remedial education; success of developmental students in college courses; completion of "gatekeeper" courses; and rates of course completion, student persistence, and degree and certificate completion.

Disaggregation of data by student characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, age, and income.

Regular assessment of progress in implementing practices that evidence indicates will promote higher levels of persistence and learning.

The use of student and institutional assessments to inform strategic planning, allocation of resources, faculty and student development, and improvements in programs and services.

Beliefs about "what works" in supporting student learning and attainment are based on evidence (McClenney and McClenney 2003; McClenney, McClenney, and Peterson 2007).

ACTION STEPS

- Identify performance measures and structures that promote ongoing program and quality improvement at the state and local levels.

- Respond to findings, whether negative or positive.

CHAPTER 5

Implementation



This strategic plan addresses

multiple aspects of community college operations, and each action step is important in moving Wyoming's community college system forward to a national position of excellence and leadership in postsecondary education. Economic circumstances and time constraints, however, will not allow the system to take on everything in the first two years. Therefore, this chapter consolidates the strategic objectives, strategies, and action steps into an implementation outline by grouping the action steps into three "tiers"

and assigns a priority rating of one through three. Tier One action steps are essential and should be undertaken during the 2010–12 biennium. Tier Two action steps generally depend on the implementation of Tier One actions and should become high priorities once Tier One steps are under way or have been completed. Tier Three action steps are those requiring substantial lead time and resources or that depend upon the completion of Tier One and Tier Two activities. Exhibit 38 presents the summary of the strategic objectives, strategies, and action steps, and offers recommended implementation priorities for each.

This strategic plan is a living document that will be updated and changed over time to reflect new priorities and needs, as well as the achievement of various action steps. The WCCC will lead periodic reviews and evaluations of the progress and success of the plan and work with colleges and other partners to move existing steps forward, remove those that are completed, and add new strategies and approaches as the need arises.

EXHIBIT 38. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps

Strategy	Action Step	**Lead Organization** and Partners	Priority and Date (M/Y) 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
1. Student Access and Success—Promote student access to education and training programs and support students in achieving their educational and professional goals.			
1.1. Increase need-based state aid to students.	a. Assess eligibility for and use of the need-based component of the Hathaway Scholarship at each college.	**Colleges** WCCC	1 3/10
	b. Assess the need for need-based aid among older, nontraditional students, regardless of whether they are enrolled full-time or part-time, and target state aid to those students.	**Colleges** WCCC	2
	c. Introduce a need-based state grant available to all Wyoming residents who attend a community college or the University of Wyoming and who are not getting aid from the Hathaway Scholarship or other sources.	**Legislature**	3
1.2. Increase the participation of women in programs leading to employment in occupations meeting the Self-Sufficiency Standard.	a. Introduce middle and high school outreach activities that expose young women to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics early.	**Colleges** WCCC	3
	b. Recruit female community college students, particularly those who are displaced homemakers or single parents, into nontraditional career fields through enhanced career counseling and marketing.	**Colleges**	2
	c. Continually seek pay equity for women employed by the community colleges.	**Colleges** WCCC	2
1.3. Enable students to register easily at any community college in the state.	a. Provide a common online enrollment portal for all community colleges.	**WCCC**	1 12/10
	b. Adopt common placement thresholds for the reading, writing, and mathematics COMPASS assessments and ACT across all seven community colleges.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 2/10
1.4. Improve statewide articulation of courses among high schools, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming.	a. Focus articulation between the community colleges and the University of Wyoming on programs leading to occupations with pay that meets the Self-Sufficiency Standard.	**WCCC** UW Colleges	1 6/11
	b. Align the work of the community colleges with the state's strategic plan for career and technical education.	**Colleges**	2 11/11
	c. Expand concurrent enrollment by encouraging participation among high school students ready for college-level work.	**Colleges** WCCC Dept of Ed.	1 Ongoing
1.5. Increase outreach to special populations.	a. Advocate for greater funding for adult basic education.	**WCCC** Legislature	1
	b. Continue to support adult basic education instruction in community colleges to promote success for students from underserved communities.	**Colleges** WCCC	3
	c. Connect adult basic education programs to career pathways opportunities.	**Colleges** WCCC	3
1.6. Enhance wrap-around services offered by the colleges to support student success.	a. Enable all community college students to develop a personal pathway allowing them to maximize the use of college resources in pursuing their goals.	**WCCC** Colleges	2
	b. Increase childcare capacity for students with families.	**Colleges**	3
	c. Increase housing for students with families or those who live too far away to commute.	**Colleges** Legislature	3
1.7. Recognize student success through the community college funding allocation formula.	a. Implement a student success component within the Wyoming community college funding allocation formula. Award 10 percent of variable costs within the formula based on course completion.	**WCCC**	1 7/12

Lead Organization and Partners Key

Business Council	Wyoming Business Council
Colleges	All community colleges in Wyoming
Dept of Ed.	Wyoming Department of Education
Dept of Emp.	Wyoming Department of Employment
Dept of Health	Wyoming Department of Health
DWS	Wyoming Department of Workforce Services
Legislature	Wyoming State Legislature
UW	University of Wyoming
WCCC	Wyoming Community College Commission
WDC	Workforce Development Council
WyDEC	Wyoming Distance Education Consortium

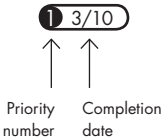


EXHIBIT 38. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps
Continued

Strategy	Action Step	**Lead Organization** and Partners	Priority and Date (M/Y) 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
2. Quality Programs—Offer quality, relevant programs that meet state and local needs.			
2.1. Ensure that colleges can adapt quickly to respond to local workforce and community needs.	a. Maintain academic, career and technical, developmental, adult continuing, and workforce education programs at all colleges to support education and skill development to meet local business, community, and economic needs.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 Ongoing
	b. Collaborate with the Department of Employment to build upon existing data resources and publications to develop a report targeted for use by community colleges. Tailor a biennial report of Wyoming economic and labor market trends to community college regions.	**WCCC** Dept of Emp.	1 2/10
	c. Implement periodic reviews of college strategic and master plans to ensure they align with the statewide strategic plan.	**Colleges** WCCC	1 3/10
3. Distance Learning—Expand the role of distance learning in serving rural and hard-to-reach populations and in providing cost-saving access and educational services for students and colleges.			
3.1. Provide support to strengthen a statewide system for distance learning.	a. Increase fiscal support for WyDEC's coordination of distance learning statewide, including the WyClass Website.	**WCCC** Legislature Colleges UW	1 7/10
	b. Develop and implement a distance learning funding formula that encourages colleges to share resources and students.	**WCCC**	2
3.2. Expand distance learning opportunities.	a. Assess the need for increasing the number of programs of study offered through distance learning.	**WCCC WyDEC Partners: Colleges**	3
	b. Offer professional development to support faculty offering distance learning courses and recruit new faculty to teach distance courses.	**WCCC WyDEC Partners: Colleges**	2
	c. Ensure that distance learning students have access to the same or equivalent student support services that are available to students attending courses on campus.	**WCCC WyDEC Partners: Colleges**	2 1/11

The Mission

Wyoming community colleges provide dynamic lifelong learning environments through higher education, workforce development, innovative partnerships, and civic and global engagement that lead to responsible citizenship and economic, social, and cultural prosperity.

State Interests

Educated citizenry: Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs.

Diversified economy: Contribute to the diversification of Wyoming's economy by supporting the expansion of business and industry into new areas.

Workforce development: Respond to the needs of existing and emerging industries by providing a well-prepared and well-trained workforce.

Efficient and effective systems: Maximize return on investment by implementing system-wide efficiencies to enhance community college operations.

Accountability and improvement: Improve the educational success of Wyoming residents by measuring outcomes and responding to findings, whether negative or positive.

EXHIBIT 38. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps
Continued

Strategy	Action Step	**Lead Organization** and Partners	Priority and Date (M/Y) 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
4. Alignment of Programs and Workforce Opportunities—Align career and technical education programs with workforce development and labor market opportunities.			
4.1. Target programs to industries projected to have the greatest number of job openings now and over the next 10 years and that will assist residents to reach their Self-Sufficiency Standard.	a. Partner with the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, Workforce Development Council, and Wyoming Business Council to identify emerging industries they have targeted for development and leverage available federal and state resources to support workforce development, education, and training initiatives. Hold a biennial meeting of the Commission, colleges, and industry stakeholders to determine how the system will address emerging industries and workforce trends.	**WCCC** DWS Dept of Emp. WDC Business Council	1 April of even-numbered years
	b. Pilot one to three P–16 career pathways. Ensure all partners are involved in the planning and implementation, including K–12, the University of Wyoming, the WCCC, and workforce and economic development agencies and organizations.	**WCCC** UW Colleges DWS	2
4.2. Place programs at appropriate locations throughout the state to ensure that Wyoming can meet the labor market demands for targeted occupations.	a. Solicit recommendations from Advisory Committees, economic and workforce development agencies, and industry representatives to help determine where programs would be most successful within the state.	**WCCC** Colleges Dept of Emp. DWS WDC Business Council	1 May of even-numbered years
	b. Use the program approval criteria described in Strategic Objective 6 to make decisions about the number and location of new programs for targeted occupations.	**WCCC**	2
5. Partnerships—Support economic development through partnerships with local and statewide business and industry, government and education agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.			
5.1. Expand current partnerships with business and industry.	a. Document use of local and statewide Advisory Committees for career and technical education and workforce training programs.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 1/10
	b. Develop a plan for using Advisory Committees for multiple purposes in community college regions and across the state.	**WCCC** Colleges	2
	c. Identify opportunities to fund noncredit workforce training programs to support rapid response to workforce development opportunities. Actively partner with the Department of Workforce Services, the Workforce Development Council, the Wyoming Business Council, and the Department of Employment to identify and respond to opportunities and to reinforce the community colleges' role as a primary resource for workforce training.	**WCCC** Colleges DWS WDC Dept of Emp. Business Council	1 Ongoing
5.2. Identify and develop new ways to share data and information with other state agencies and organizations.	a. Partner in ongoing efforts to establish shared data and information systems among public sector agencies, including the Departments of Employment, Workforce Services, Education, Health, and the WCCC and the University of Wyoming.	**WCCC** Dept of Emp. DWS Dept of Ed. Dept of Health UW	2
6. Coordination and Collaboration—Improve system efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced communication and coordination.			
6.1. Promote shared policy development and decision making and improve collaboration among WCCC Commissioners, WCCC staff, and the colleges.	a. Use the Consultation Agreement as defined.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 12/09
	b. Use the strategic plan criteria for new program approval based on state interests.	**WCCC**	1 6/10
	c. Use the strategic plan criteria for capital construction approval based on state interests.	**WCCC**	1 6/10
6.2. Implement processes to improve system efficiency and reduce unnecessary redundancy.	a. Identify and pursue opportunities to automate and centralize selected college operational functions.	**WCCC** Colleges	2

EXHIBIT 38. Strategic Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps
Continued

Strategy	Action Step	**Lead Organization** and Partners	Priority and Date (M/Y) 1=HIGHEST 3=LOWEST
7. Adequate Resources—Provide adequate resources, given available funds, distributed in a way that promotes quality and positive student outcomes.			
7.1. Ensure that the colleges have and maintain adequate facilities aligned with the statewide strategic plan.	a. Prioritize capital construction projects once each biennium so that colleges have time to plan for the future.	**WCCC** Colleges	2 8/10
	b. Change state statute to allow biennial prioritization of community college capital construction projects.	**WCCC** Legislature	1 8/10
	c. Consider student housing proposals as part of the capital construction prioritization process.	**WCCC**	3
	d. Identify funding each biennium for upgrades to equipment needed for college programs that meet state needs and strategic objectives.	**WCCC** Legislature	2
7.2. Employ sustainable and comprehensive funding mechanisms that recognize the multiple functions and roles of community colleges.	a. Provide funds to address the costs of enrollment growth on a biennial basis.	**Legislature** WCCC	2
	b. Help the colleges get and maintain resources through special purpose funding for innovative college programs aligned with the statewide strategic plan. Assist in identifying the start-up costs of developing and implementing new programs.	**WCCC** Legislature	2
	c. In the future, introduce additional elements to the state community college funding formula that emphasize student success and program quality. Access is currently the priority reflected in the funding formula's focus on FTE enrollment in credit programs.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 7/12
8. System of Continuous Improvement—Emphasize accountability and student success.			
8.1. Build a statewide longitudinal data system for community colleges.	a. Determine the cost of a data warehouse (DW) that could house unit-level data for all community college students, including credit and noncredit students.	**WCCC**	1 2/10
	b. Continue to collaborate on collection and submission of appropriate college- and student-level data while a DW is being assessed and implemented.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 Ongoing
	c. Install a DW at the WCCC that can house and maintain a state community college longitudinal dataset.	**WCCC**	2
	d. Ensure that WCCC staff have the database and research expertise to maintain and use data effectively and to distribute funding based on results to improve student and institutional outcomes.	**WCCC**	2
	e. Require colleges to submit unit-level enrollment, student, course, and financial data each term and annually to populate the longitudinal database.	**WCCC** Colleges	2
	f. Create a state longitudinal data system that links K–12, community colleges, and the University of Wyoming.	**WCCC** Dept of Ed. UW	2
8.2. Develop an accountability system that allows the WCCC and the colleges to demonstrate return on the state's investment.	a. Identify additional indicators that demonstrate the state's return on its investment.	**WCCC** Colleges Legislature	1 4/10
	b. Develop an annual report detailing statistical information and accountability results statewide and by college and make it available to policymakers and the public.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 6/10
8.3. Use data to promote student success and program improvement.	a. Identify performance measures and structures that promote ongoing program and quality improvement at the state and local levels.	**WCCC** Colleges Dept of Emp. Dept of Ed. UW DWS	1 4/10
	b. Respond to findings, whether negative or positive.	**WCCC** Colleges	1 Ongoing

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Appendixes



Appendix A

Evaluation Tool for Program Approval

Evaluation Tool for Capital Construction

Appendix B

Interviews and Focus Groups

Guidelines for Use of this Evaluation Tool: *This instrument is designed to assist the Wyoming Community College Commission and Wyoming community colleges in organizing and reviewing requests for approval of a new program. (While the primary intent is for program approval, it could also be used for making decisions about elimination of existing programs.) It is expected that as the instrument is used, it will be adapted/modified as the environment changes, to accommodate new information needs, and to optimize its usefulness. In reviewing a request (or as a college plans a submission), the related questions and examples of evidence should be used to assign a rating for each criterion. It will be important for the Commission to decide whether they want to apply weights to the criterion and what an acceptable range of ratings will be for a program to receive approval or elimination. Ratings go from a low of "1" to a high of "3".*

PROGRAM APPROVAL CRITERIA	RATINGS		
STATE INTERESTS	**1**	**2**	**3**
Educated Citizenry Increase the educational attainment level of Wyoming residents by offering access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs. The community colleges all provide comprehensive programs that are designed to meet a broad spectrum of educational needs that go beyond the attainment of employment. That is, while helping to ensure a job for a student after completion of a program is important, it is also important that Wyoming citizens obtain an education that helps them participate in a democratic government and that enhances their quality of life. To accomplish this, the colleges need to make sure that they do everything feasible to ensure access to the broadest range of individuals possible.	There is no evidence provided that would lead one to believe that the program will in any way increase the number of degrees or certificates offered or that it will enhance individuals' education in a significant way. There is no discussion of how the college(s) will ensure or increase access for a range of students. The program does not fit well within the range of educational, training, and cultural programs or does not seem to have the potential to contribute to an appropriate balance of educational programs.	There is some evidence for one or more of the factors identified (i.e., increase in educational attainment levels, improved access, and balance of educational offerings), but it is limited or uneven. That is, there may be an indication of how it will increase the number of degrees or certificates, but there is no information about ensuring or increasing access. It may also be that the program does not clearly fit within the educational purposes or goals of a comprehensive community college.	There is evidence for two or more of the factors, and the evidence for at least one of them is strong and is reasonable for the others. That is, the college has provided information that the program will increase the educational attainment level of Wyoming citizens, ensure access for a range of students, and/or fits well within the purpose of community colleges. It may also be responsive to a need for education in an area identified as a broader educational need than simply labor needs, e.g., to promote degree/certificate attainment in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).
	Related questions: 1. Will the program increase the number of associate's degrees and certificates awarded or promote the attainment of a bachelor's degree, or will it otherwise raise the educational attainment level of people across Wyoming? 2. Do the goals for the program include descriptions of how it will enhance the quality of life for individuals by improving their level of education? 3. In what ways will the college market the program, recruit students, or otherwise ensure access to the broadest range of students in Wyoming? Is evidence provided that there is adequate interest on the part of a wide spectrum of students within (and perhaps outside) Wyoming? 4. Does the program fit within the types of programs expected to be offered at a community college, and does it enhance (and balance) the offerings across the three areas: educational, training, and cultural?		**Examples of evidence:** O Number of degrees and certificates currently offered by related programs and projected numbers based on projected employment rates O Estimates of students in the community who have expressed interest or who are presumed to be eligible and/or in need of such a program O Preliminary plan for recruiting groups of students that have not previously been served by the college O Documentation of how the program will enhance the educational attainment level of citizens in Wyoming, i.e., by awarding degrees and/or providing additional opportunities for educational experiences

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Diversified Economy Contribute to the diversification of Wyoming's economy by supporting the expansion of business and industry into new areas.	There is little or no evidence that this program is one that addresses a new area of business or industry in Wyoming. The proposed program is one that addresses workforce needs only in an existing area, and there is no indication that it will open a new sector within that area. The program may address a need in an existing business or industry that is not currently met in the particular community, but it is not well documented.	There is some evidence that this program will address the workforce needs of a new or emerging business or industry (or the needs of a new sector in an existing one), but the data are not complete or are, in some other way, insufficient. The program may address a need in an existing business or industry that is not currently met in the particular community, and there is some documentation to support the need.	There is substantial evidence that this program will support the workforce needs of a new or emerging industry (or the needs of a new sector in an existing one). The available economic development data support the need and provide projections for the degree to which the workforce needs to be expanded. The program may be addressing a need in an existing business or industry that is not currently met in the particular community, and there is ample documentation for that.
	Related questions: 1. What new area of business or industry (or new sector of existing business or industry) is the program designed to address? 2. What evidence is provided regarding workforce needs within this area of business or industry? 3. What information is provided about the future of this new area of business or industry? 4. What information is provided about the potential employment trajectory for graduates of this program? 5. In what other ways (besides meeting workforce needs) does this program support an emerging area of business or industry?		**Examples of evidence:** O Data projections on employment needs O Documentation on plans for building the business or industry sector O Information on potential careers in new area of business or industry

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Workforce Development Respond to the needs of existing and emerging industries by providing a well-prepared and well-trained workforce.	The content of this program is not clearly related to a field with a high demand for workers currently, or a field projected to need a high number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. The link between the content and skills taught in the program and their application in high-demand industries is limited or unclear. Few graduates of this program will likely find jobs in this field in Wyoming upon graduation. Graduates of this program will not be sufficiently prepared for upper-division coursework at a four-year institution. There is no evidence that industry representatives have reviewed the content of this program.	The content of this program is related to a field with moderate demand for workers currently, or a field projected to need a moderate number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. Or, the program is peripherally related to a current or future high-demand field, but other programs are more directly related. The content and skills taught in the program are moderately linked to high-demand industries. Some graduates of this program will likely find jobs in high-demand industries in Wyoming upon graduation. Graduates of this program will be marginally prepared for upper-division coursework at a four-year institution. A limited number of industry representatives have reviewed the content of the program.	The content of this program is clearly related to a field with a high demand for workers currently, or a field projected to need a high number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. The link between the content and skills taught in the program and their application in high-demand industries is strong. Many graduates of this program will likely find jobs in this field in Wyoming upon graduation. Graduates of this program will be well prepared for upper-division coursework at a four-year institution. Many industry representatives have reviewed the program and found it focuses on the appropriate content knowledge and skills for jobs in that field.
	Related questions: 1. Which industries in Wyoming currently need workers? 2. What are the emerging industries in Wyoming now? In the near future? 3. Would this program produce graduates prepared to work in an industry that needs workers currently or in an industry identified as emerging in Wyoming? 4. Would this program prepare students for upper-division coursework in the same academic field at a four-year institution? 5. Have industry representatives in fields currently in need of workers reviewed this new program? If so, what are their opinions about the value of a graduate of this program in the workforce? Would they be likely to hire graduates of this program? 6. Are there potential business or industry partners that can provide resources or training facilities?		**Examples of evidence:** O Data from agencies such as the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, Workforce Development Council, and Wyoming Business Council documenting current as well as projected industries with the highest demand for workers in Wyoming O The curriculum of the proposed program mapped to the skill sets needed for jobs in relevant high-demand industries O The number of workers needed in relevant high-demand fields currently and in the near future, matched to the number of graduates of existing programs in related academic fields at the community colleges and the University, as well as the projected number of annual graduates from the proposed program O A plan for articulating the program with relevant programs at the University of Wyoming O Statements from industry representatives who have reviewed the program attesting to its quality and relevance of the content to their respective fields

	1	2	3
Efficient and Effective Systems Maximize the return on investment by implementing system-wide efficiencies to enhance community college operations.	There is little to no evidence that this program serves an unmet need in the state. Similar programs are offered at other colleges and meet the state's existing and projected need, or the state does not have a high need for such a program. The proposed program will not include faculty and staff already serving at the college. The proposed program will not incorporate existing course offerings at the college or distance learning offerings at other institutions. The proposed program will not offer any of its courses through distance learning format. The proposed program lacks a plan for measuring the return on the state's investment.	There is some evidence that this program serves an unmet need in the state; however, similar programs at other colleges meet the majority of the existing and projected need in the state. The proposed program will include some faculty and staff already serving at the college. The proposed program will incorporate some existing course offerings at the college and distance learning offerings at other institutions. The proposed program will offer a limited number of its courses through distance learning format. The proposed program includes a preliminary plan for measuring the return on the state's investment.	There is strong evidence that this program serves an unmet need in the state. Either the program is not offered at any other college, or similar programs offered elsewhere are not sufficient to meet existing or future needs. The proposed program will maximize the use of faculty and staff already serving at the college. The proposed program will maximize use of existing course offerings at the college and distance learning offerings at other institutions. The proposed program will offer some or all of its courses through distance learning format. The proposed program includes a well-conceived plan for measuring the return on the state's investment.

Related questions:

1. Do other colleges in the state offer programs similar to the proposed program? If so, is there evidence that another program is needed? If not, is there evidence that the state needs such a program?
2. Does the proposed program take advantage of current expertise and capacity at the college?
3. To what extent will new equipment and facilities need to be purchased or built?
4. To what extent will the proposed program incorporate existing course offerings?
5. Does the proposed program include a plan for offering some or all of the content through distance learning?
6. How will the home campus for the proposed program measure the state's return on investment for the new offering?
7. Has the college provided information to the WCCC about existing programs and programs that have been discontinued?
8. Has the college consulted with other colleges to determine if new program offerings, faculty, or resources can be shared for the same or related programs?

Examples of evidence:

- The number of workers needed in relevant high-demand fields currently and in the near future, matched to the number of graduates of existing programs in related academic fields at the community colleges and the University, as well as the projected number of annual graduates from the proposed program
- Information about current faculty and staff slated to participate in the proposed program, as well as detailed information about new positions that would need to be filled for the program to function
- Information about any additional facilities or major equipment needs the college would need to procure for the proposed program to operate
- List of distance learning course offerings at the other six colleges that could and would be incorporated into the proposed program's curriculum
- Information about which of the proposed program's courses could be offered to students at other institutions through distance learning, and plans for developing such capacity
- Information provided by the college about how the program will measure student outcomes in relation to the state's investment

	1	2	3
Accountability and Improvement Improve the educational success of Wyoming residents by measuring outcomes and responding to findings.	The proposed program has no apparent plan for collecting information about student outcomes and program quality or using data to inform the refinement of the program's design or delivery. It is not evident that the college has the capacity to conduct such data collection and analyses.	The proposed program has plans to collect some information about the program quality and outcomes of participating students. The proposed program has some plans, though perhaps not well developed, for how to analyze collected data and use the results to inform adjustments to the program's design and delivery. The proposal lacks specificity around who would collect and analyze such data, though there is evidence that such capacity exists at the college.	The proposed program has a strong plan for collecting data and reporting multiple measures of student outcomes and program quality. The proposed program has a well-defined plan for how to analyze collected data and use the results to inform adjustments to the program's design and delivery. The college has identified qualified staff to collect and analyze aforementioned data or has a feasible plan for employing an external entity to conduct such collection and analyses.
	Related questions: 1. Does the proposed program include a plan for collecting evidence regarding student outcomes and program quality? 2. How will data about student outcomes and program quality be used to refine the program or to decide whether the college should continue to offer it? 3. Who will be responsible at the college level for collecting, analyzing, and using collected data?	**Examples of evidence:** O Description of student outcomes the college intends to measure for participants in the proposed program, data sources to be used to measure those outcomes, and potential analyses to be conducted using those data O A plan for including the findings from such analyses in a regular review process for the proposed program O Names or position titles for those responsible for collecting and analyzing data at the college	

OTHER CRITERIA	1	2	3
Labor Needs Meet the workforce needs for current and emerging industries.	The content of this program is not clearly related to a field with a high demand for workers currently or a field projected to need a high number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. The link between the content and skills taught in the program and their application in high-demand industries is limited or unclear. Few graduates of this program will likely find jobs in this field in Wyoming upon graduation. Wages for these jobs would be less than the median county wage. There is no evidence that industry representatives have reviewed the content of the program. If other postsecondary institutions in the state offer similar programs, the proposed program seems to unnecessarily duplicate those programs. There is little or no evidence of unmet demand among students and employers.	The content of this program is related to a field with moderate demand for workers currently or a field projected to need a moderate number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. Or, the program is peripherally related to a current or future high-demand field, but other programs are more directly related. The content and skills taught in the program are somewhat linked to their application in high-demand industries. A limited number of industry representatives have reviewed the content of the program. Some graduates of this program will likely find jobs in high-demand industries in Wyoming upon graduation. Wages for these jobs in fields related to this program are roughly equivalent to the median county wage. If other postsecondary institutions in the state offer similar programs, the proposed program might serve unmet demand among students and employers, though the evidence is not clear or compelling.	The content of this program is clearly related to a field with a high demand for workers currently, or a field projected to need a high number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. The link between the content and skills taught in the program and their application in high-demand industries is strong. Many industry representatives have reviewed the program and found it focuses on the appropriate content knowledge and skills for jobs in that field. Employers in the region and/or state have pledged to support the development of the program and hire qualified graduates. Many graduates of this program will likely find jobs in this field in Wyoming upon graduation. Wages for jobs in fields related to this program exceed the median county wage. If other postsecondary institutions in the state offer similar programs, the proposed program clearly serves an unmet demand among students and employers.

Related questions:

1. Which industries in Wyoming currently need workers?
2. What are the emerging industries in Wyoming now? Projected to be in the near future?
3. Will this program produce graduates prepared to work in an industry that needs workers currently or industries identified as emerging in Wyoming?
4. Will this program meet a need in the state's workforce unmet by other colleges' program offerings?
5. Have industry representatives in fields currently in need of workers reviewed this new program? If so, what are their opinions about the value of a graduate of this program in the workforce? Will they likely hire graduates of this program?
6. If this program is similar to those offered at other postsecondary institutions in the state or in neighboring states, is the duplication warranted, i.e., how does the duplication strengthen the overall system?
7. Upon completion of the proposed program, are students likely to earn a wage that exceeds the median county wage?

Examples of evidence:

- O Data from agencies such as the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, Workforce Development Council, and Wyoming Business Council documenting current as well as projected industries with the highest demand for workers in Wyoming
- O The curriculum of the proposed program mapped to the skill sets needed for jobs in relevant high-demand industries
- O Information on the number of workers needed in relevant high-demand fields currently and in the near future, matched to the number of graduates of existing programs in related academic fields at the community colleges and the University, as well as the projected number of annual graduates from the proposed program
- O A plan for articulating the program with relevant programs at the University of Wyoming
- O Statements from industry representatives who have reviewed the program attesting to the quality and relevance of this program in their respective fields
- O Pledges or memoranda of understanding from employers agreeing to hire qualified graduates of the proposed program

	1	2	3
Curriculum Development Ensure program quality and integration within and collaboration across colleges.	There is limited evidence that the new program will integrate well with existing programs (if it is related to existing programs) and no clear rationale for adding this program to those offered. While there is some description of the curricula for the program, it is not well developed, e.g., there are no sample syllabi and no complete list of courses. There is little or no information about similar programs at other colleges or evidence that there have been collaborative discussions across campuses about creating efficiencies in the program offerings. There is little information that the appropriate individuals from the college have been involved in planning discussions or that research has been conducted to examine what is done nationally in regard to such programs or what is needed regionally. There is no apparent plan for monitoring quality of the program, especially during its early stages of implementation.	Some information is provided regarding the planning approach and the curricular plans, but it is not as complete as would be desired. If it is related to an existing program, there is information about how, and if it is a new program, a rationale is stated for why it is being submitted for approval. There are some sample syllabi and a list of courses that seems mostly complete. There is some evidence that collaborative discussions with other campuses have occurred and that the college has initiated plans to ensure that they can take advantage of other course development, faculty expertise, or other design aspects. The college also provides information about how it is the same or different from curricular offerings at other campuses. There is evidence that a plan for monitoring program quality will be undertaken, but few details are provided.	Information about the planning process is quite complete, and the rationale for providing the program curricula—whether it is tied to an existing program or a new program—is clear. It is also clear that the college has done the background research necessary to document the need for such a program in the region and that, if appropriate, it is related to needs specified nationally. A complete list of courses and some sample syllabi are included. It is evident from the plan that necessary collaborative discussions have taken place across campuses to document how colleges offering similar programs can find mutual benefits. There is a clear plan for monitoring program quality, particularly during early stages of implementation.
	Related questions: 1. Is there a clear rationale for the program and a clear description of the curriculum that will be the focus of the program? 2. Has the college conducted background research to determine regional or national interest or need for graduates of such a program? 3. Has the curriculum gone through a formal curriculum review process at the college? 4. Have faculty with related expertise been consulted on the curricular content? 5. Has the college checked on the feasibility of hiring faculty needed for the program? 6. In what ways has the college collaborated with administrators at other colleges that offer similar programs to determine whether there is unnecessary redundancy or how they might share resources? Have they checked on common course numbering? 7. Has the college considered a schedule such that sufficient courses and sections will be offered at times and in ways (e.g., through distance learning) that suit student needs?		**Examples of evidence:** O Description or graphic display of how program fits with existing program(s) O Summary of findings from literature review or other documentation, results of consultation with local advisory committee(s) O List of courses and sample course syllabi O Minutes of collaboration meetings with other colleges O Sample/proposed schedule

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Pathways Illustrate connections to state's adopted Pathways, including workforce and adult education, as well as K–12 and the University if relevant. Ideally, the program would connect to one of the five economic development targets identified as high-priority industries in three pilot sites: ○ Energy—includes the agriculture and manufacturing clusters ○ Construction—includes the architecture and construction cluster ○ Hospitality—includes the hospitality and tourism cluster ○ Technology—includes the IT, STEM, and Art/AV/Communication clusters ○ Health care—includes the health science cluster	No information is provided about how this program will fit within the state's adopted 16 Pathways or connect to the five economic development targets. No connections are made to Pathways that would include workforce or adult education, K–12, or the University.	Some information is provided that links this program to one or more of the state's 16 adopted Pathways, but it is not fully articulated. Reference is made to programs of study in the career cluster and career pathway, but the programs are not fully described. Some links are made to workforce or adult education, K–12, and/or the University.	It is clearly specified that the program connects to one or more of the state's 16 adopted Pathways and to one of the five economic development targets. The program includes curriculum framework models for each career cluster and career pathway that identify the relevant secondary academic and technical courses that lead to postsecondary enrollment and career entry. Connections are made to other programs in the educational continuum: workforce, adult education, K–12, or the University.
	Related questions: 1. To which of the state's adopted Pathways does the program connect? In what way(s)? 2. How will the program facilitate a student's progress along a Pathway? 3. How does the program make connections to other points in the pipeline, i.e., workforce, adult education, K–12, or the University?		**Examples of evidence:** ○ Graphic display or narrative detailing how the program fits within one or more Pathways ○ List of connections made with workforce and adult education, K–12, or the University and descriptions of how those connections will be reflected in the program

	1	2	3
Faculty Support Provide plan for identification and recruitment of new faculty and evidence of support among existing faculty.	The provided information related to required faculty for the proposed program is too limited with regard to number, credentials, or qualifications needed. There is little or no information about the feasibility of attracting the individuals needed, nor is there much information provided about a recruitment plan. Little evidence exists to indicate that the program's development had faculty involvement and input. No evidence is provided that faculty with relevant expertise have been consulted.	While there is a plan that describes the qualifications of faculty needed for the proposed program, it is not complete, and there is some, but inadequate information about how such faculty would be recruited. There is little information about the availability of prospective faculty for the program. There is some evidence that the program's development included faculty involvement and input. Statements of support for the program from current faculty are included, but it is not clear that they are representative of related program areas.	There is a clear plan for meeting the need for new, additional faculty for the proposed program, although it is understood that the college would not begin a hiring process until the program is approved. Data are provided that demonstrate the availability of faculty for such positions, and there is some information that they have explored the feasibility of attracting individuals who may need to relocate or agree to a lower salary than they can make in other positions. There is strong evidence that the development of the proposed program was faculty driven and based on broad faculty interest and support.
	Related questions: 1. Are the qualifications for required faculty clearly described? Is there information about the availability of such persons to assume a faculty position? 2. Is there a recruitment plan in place to ensure the identification and hiring of the required faculty? What strategies will be undertaken? 3. Is there evidence that the process of developing this program was faculty driven and inclusive of faculty from related program areas? 4. Have other colleges been consulted for ideas about recruiting or sharing faculty?		**Examples of evidence:** O Description of number of faculty and related credentials needed O Recruitment plan, including any information about availability of individuals with credentials needed O Summary statement regarding support of current faculty

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Recruitment Strategies Ensure that there is clear demand for the program and that a plan is in place for building awareness and recruiting students.	The proposal includes minimal evidence of student interest in the proposed program. If provided, the evidence does not suggest that student interest is very high. The proposal includes minimal evidence of employer interest in employee participation in the program. The proposal lacks information about the nature of student interest in similar programs offered by other postsecondary institutions. The college has provided little evidence indicating it has considered marketing strategies for the proposed program.	The proposal includes some evidence of student interest in the proposed program, but the evidence may indicate that the degree of student interest is moderate. The proposal includes some evidence of employer interest in employee participation in the program. The evidence indicates that employer interest in employee participation is moderate. Similar programs at other colleges in the state or elsewhere have experienced some student interest or may have faced some recruitment challenges. The proposal may or may not address these challenges. The college has provided general descriptions of potential marketing strategies for the proposed program.	The proposal includes robust evidence of student interests in the proposed program. The evidence indicates that student interest in the proposed program is strong. The proposal includes strong evidence of employer commitment to employee participation in the program. Similar programs at other colleges in the state or elsewhere have experienced strong student interest and participation rates. The college has considered marketing strategies for the proposed program and includes full descriptions of those options in the proposal.
	Related questions: 1. What is the extent of student demand for the proposed program? How has the college gauged this demand? 2. How committed would local/regional/state employers be to supporting current and future employee participation in the proposed program? 3. How would the college approach recruitment for this program?	**Examples of evidence:** O Survey data or other systematically collected information indicating interest of current and prospective students in fields directly related to the proposed program O Survey data or other systematically collected information indicating employer interest in supporting current or future employees' participation in the proposed program O Evidence that similar programs at other colleges in the state or nationally have experienced strong student interest and participation O A description of the marketing strategies the college will use to attract students to the new program	

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Resource Needs Document adequate provision of resources for establishing and sustaining the program.	The proposal provides only rudimentary information about possible facilities to house the proposed program or equipment needed for the program, or does not address these points at all. The proposal lacks a detailed implementation schedule. The proposal lacks a projected budget for the program. The proposal lacks projections for the expected number of students who will enroll in the courses offered by the program, major in the program, and complete the program.	The proposal includes a plan for facilities or equipment that will be used for the program, though the proposal lacks some specificity. The proposal includes an implementation schedule but lacks some specificity or appears to be unrealistic in some ways. The proposal includes a budget for the program, though it lacks some detail or appears to be inadequate. The proposal includes some information about the expected number of participants in the program, though the estimates are rough or incomplete.	The proposal clearly outlines the facilities that will be used for the program, including existing classrooms, off-site facilities, or facilities that would need to be constructed. It also clearly outlines the equipment that will be used for the program, both equipment the college already has, equipment that will need to be upgraded, and equipment that will need to be purchased. Any resources to be provided by local businesses are documented. The proposal includes a detailed implementation schedule and a projected budget for the program. The proposal includes the expected number of students who will enroll in the courses offered by the program, major in the program, and complete the program. If the college plans to devote start-up funds to the program, the proposal outlines the nature of those expenditures.
	Related questions: 1. What facilities will be needed to house the proposed program? Does the college currently have these facilities? Will it need to modify them? Will it need to construct new facilities? Will it be possible to use off-campus space for this program? 2. What equipment will be needed to support the proposed program? Does the college currently have this equipment? Will it need to upgrade or modify it? Will it need to purchase new equipment? Will it be possible to use off-campus or leased equipment for this program? 3. Will the program be supported in some manner by local or regional businesses? If so, in what ways? Are there any agreements between the college and these entities outlining the nature of this support? 4. How many students will participate in this program annually? How many will complete the program? 5. Does the college plan to devote any of its own start-up or innovation funds to support the initial stages of this program's planning or implementation?		**Examples of evidence:** O A detailed list of facilities that will be used for the program, including necessary upgrades to existing facilities and facilities that would need to be constructed O A detailed list of equipment that will be used for the program, including necessary upgrades to existing equipment and equipment that would need to be purchased O Documentation of any resources offered by local/regional/state businesses to support the program O A detailed plan for the proposed program's implementation, including a timeline O Estimated numbers of students expected to enroll in the program's courses, major in the program, and complete the program/certification O Any start-up or innovation funds the college plans to devote to the proposed program's planning or implementation

Guidelines for Use of this Evaluation Tool: *This instrument is designed to assist the Wyoming Community College Commission and Wyoming community colleges in reviewing and prioritizing requests for capital construction projects. It is expected that the instrument will be adapted/modified in the course of being used as the environment changes and to accommodate new information needs. In reviewing a request (or as a college plans a submission), the related questions and examples of evidence should be used to assign a rating for each criterion. It will be important for the Commission to decide whether they want to apply weights to the criterion and what an acceptable range of ratings will be for a program to receive approval and be included in a prioritized list of community college capital construction projects. Ratings go from a low of "1" to a high of "3".*

CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION CRITERIA RATINGS

STATE INTERESTS	**1**	**2**	**3**
Educated Citizenry Increase the educational attainment of Wyoming residents by offering access to a wide range of educational, training, and cultural programs. The community colleges all provide comprehensive programs that are designed to meet a broad spectrum of educational needs that go beyond the attainment of employment. That is, while helping to ensure a job for a student after completion of a program is important, it is also important that Wyoming citizens obtain an education that helps them participate in a democratic government and that enhances their quality of life. To accomplish this, the colleges need to make sure that they do everything feasible to ensure access to the broadest range of individuals possible.	There is little or no evidence or documentation that demonstrates how this facility completes the comprehensive offerings at the college. Information is not provided to document how the proposed facility will increase access for Wyoming students or to particular groups of Wyoming students. There are no data to support how this facility will result in more students with degrees, certificates, or experiences that will raise their educational level.	There is some evidence that the proposed facility will contribute to a more educated citizenry because it fits within the broad range of services across educational, training, and cultural offerings. It may not be clear that it is a definite enhancement or that it does not duplicate what is already available. There is some indication that it will increase access to educational offerings for more students, but there is not sufficient evidence to support the case.	The plan for the proposed facility includes clear evidence that it will enhance the provision of and contribute to a balance of services across educational, training, and cultural offerings. There is also information that clearly indicates that the facility will expand access to a wider number and range of Wyoming students. It is evident that the facility will add to the capacity of the college to provide educational opportunities that will afford students a degree, a certificate, or experiences that will clearly raise their educational level.
	Related questions: 1. In what ways will this construction project facilitate greater access to education for more students or for underserved populations? 2. Does the project fit within the purpose of a community college and contribute to a balance of educational, training, and cultural offerings? 3. Will the project enhance the quality of student life at the community college? 4. In what ways will this project enhance the education level of Wyoming citizens, i.e., provide more degrees or certificates or otherwise give citizens the opportunity to raise their educational attainment level?		**Examples of evidence:** O Description of facility and plans for its use for educational, training, or cultural offerings O Data on range of offerings provided by college and information on how this facility will complement/enhance current offerings and contribute to a more comprehensive, balanced range of offerings O Projections on how many new students will be served, how many degrees or certificates will be offered

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Diversified Economy Contribute to the diversification of Wyoming's economy by supporting the expansion of business and industry into new areas.	There is either no or only a tenuous link between this proposed facility and the expansion of the Wyoming economy into a new area of business or industry or into a new sector of an existing business or industry. No information is provided about how this facility will support an increase in students' employment in a new business or industry.	While it is clear that this facility is proposed to support expansion of the Wyoming economy into a new area of business or industry or into a new sector of an existing business or industry, the evidence that is provided only partially in supports plans for economic development in the local area, and it is somewhat unclear what the long-term prospects are for this new area of business or industry. Some data are provided about employment prospects for graduates of the program, but it is not clear how many students can be gainfully employed after completion of the program.	It is very clear that this facility is proposed to support expansion of the Wyoming economy into a new area of business or industry or into a new sector of an existing business or industry. Data have been provided that clearly indicate that the plan is based on reliable local economic development plans for building or expanding this area and that students who pursue this new area will have a high likelihood of finding employment in this emerging business or industry. Information is also provided that projects the long-term potential for this new area and the feasibility for maximizing use of the facility.
	Related questions: 1. In what specific ways will this project contribute to the development of a more diversified economy in Wyoming? 2. What new business or industry or new sector of an existing industry will this new facility support? 3. If the facility is not specifically designed to support a new business or industry, is there at least an indirect link to a new area of development? 4. Will this facility provide educational offerings that will enhance the employment potential of students at this college? If so, what data support that?		**Examples of evidence:** O Economic development plans for new business or industry in local area O Information about the level of prospective student interest in pursuing work in the new business or industry O Projective data on employment opportunities in new business or industry O Plan for long-term use of facility for new business or industry or for re-purposing facility if new business or industry is projected to be relatively short term

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Workforce Development Respond to the needs of existing and emerging industries by providing facilities that support a well-prepared and well-trained workforce.	The proposed facility will house programs not clearly related to a field with a high demand for workers currently, or a field projected to need a high number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. Few graduates of these programs will likely find jobs in this field in Wyoming upon graduation. There is little or no evidence of support for the proposed facility and/or the programs it will house from business or industry partners.	The proposed facility will house programs related to a field with moderate demand for workers currently, or a field projected to need a moderate number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. Or, the programs to be housed in the proposed facility are peripherally related to a current or future high-demand field, but other programs are more directly related. Some graduates of these programs will likely find jobs in high-demand industries in Wyoming upon graduation. There is some evidence of support for the proposed facility and/or the programs it will house from business or industry partners.	The proposed facility will house programs clearly related to a field that currently has a high demand for workers or a field projected to need a high number of workers in the near future in Wyoming. Many graduates of these programs will likely find jobs in this field in Wyoming upon graduation. There is strong evidence of support for the proposed facility and/or the programs it will house from business or industry partners.
	Related questions: 1. Which industries in Wyoming currently need workers? 2. What are the emerging industries in Wyoming now? In the near future? 3. Will this proposed facility house programs that will produce graduates prepared to work in an industry that needs workers currently or industries identified as emerging in Wyoming? 4. Will this proposed facility house programs that will prepare students for rigorous, upper-division coursework at a four-year institution? 5. Are there potential business or industry partners that are willing to contribute resources or otherwise provide support for the proposed facility?		**Examples of evidence:** O Data from agencies such as the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Employment, Workforce Development Council, and Wyoming Business Council documenting current as well as projected industries with the highest demand for workers in Wyoming O The number of workers needed in relevant high-demand fields currently and in the near future, matched to the number of graduates of existing programs in related academic fields at the community colleges and University, as well as the projected number of annual graduates from the proposed program O Information about the programs that would be housed in the proposed facility and demand for graduates for such programs O Evidence of interest or commitment from business or industry partners to contribute resources toward the proposed facility

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Efficient and Effective Systems Maximize the use of efficient design and construction principles.	There is little or no evidence that efficiency or sustainability have been considered in the design of the proposed facility. Additionally, little or no evidence is provided indicating that efficiency or sustainability has been incorporated into plans for construction of the proposed facility. The proposal does not project how long demand for the intended uses of the facility will exist, or the projections in the proposal suggest that demand for those uses will be short lived. The proposed facility will be difficult to adapt or convert for other uses.	There is some evidence that efficiency and sustainability have been considered in the design of the proposed facility. Additionally, some evidence is provided indicating that efficiency and sustainability have been incorporated into plans for construction of the proposed facility. The proposal projects how long demand for the intended uses of the facility will exist, though projections may not be based on strong evidence or the projections indicate that demand for those uses will extend only moderately into the future. The proposed facility could be adapted or converted for other uses, though perhaps with some difficulty.	There is strong evidence that efficiency and sustainability have been considered in the design of the proposed facility. Additionally, abundant evidence is provided indicating that efficiency and sustainability have been incorporated into plans for construction of the proposed facility. The proposal projects how long demand for the intended uses of the facility will exist, and those projections are based on strong evidence. The projections indicate that demand for those uses will extend far into the future. The proposed facility could be adapted or converted for other uses without difficulty.
	Related questions: 1. In what ways have efficiency and sustainability been incorporated in the proposed facility's design? 2. How have efficiency and sustainability been incorporated into the plan for the proposed facility's construction? 3. How long does the college project it will need the facility for its proposed uses? 4. How flexible will the proposed facility be in meeting the changing needs of the college?		**Examples of evidence:** O Plans relating to the design and construction of the proposed facility, with emphasis on those aspects where efficiency and sustainability have been considered O Information about the intended use for the proposed facility and projections about how long demand for such purposes will exist O Information about the possibilities and challenges around adapting the physical structure of the proposed facility for other uses

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Accountability and Improvement Promote the use of data about the condition and purposes of existing and proposed facilities.	Data from the state facilities database do not clearly indicate that the age, condition, intended life cycle, capacity, and usage rates of existing facilities at the college proposing the new facility warrant the new project. The existing structures at the proposing college are of sufficient quality and size to serve the purposes of the proposed facility.	Data from the state facilities database indicates that the age, condition, intended life cycle, capacity, and usage rates of existing facilities at the college proposing the new facility may warrant the new project, however the proposal does not use available data to convincingly demonstrate the need. The existing structures at the proposing college could possibly be of sufficient quality and size to serve the purposes of the proposed facility.	Data from the state facilities database indicates that the age, condition, intended life cycle, capacity, and usage rates of existing facilities at the college proposing the new facility clearly warrant the new project. The existing structures at the proposing college are demonstrably not of sufficient quality and size to serve the purposes of the proposed facility.
	Related questions: 1. What are the conditions of existing buildings at the college proposing the new facility? 2. What are the capacities and rates of usage of existing facilities at the college submitting the proposal? How does this college compare on these variables to the other colleges in the state? 3. What is the proposed capacity and intended purposes for the proposed facility? Is the capacity and design of the proposed facility well suited to the intended purposes?	**Examples of evidence:** O Information about the age and intended life cycles of existing and proposed facilities at the college O Information about the capacity and rates of usage of existing and proposed facilities at the college and rates for facilities at other colleges O Information about the intended capacity and purposes of the proposed facility. Detailed explanations for how the proposed facility is matched in size and design for the intended purposes	

OTHER CRITERIA	1	2	3
Community Support Demonstrate degree of support by the community.	The community has committed none or very little of the funds for the project. The community has a weak track record of supplying the college with resources for facility construction. Colleges that are in counties or communities with fewer resources have not provided background information about the financial shortfall the new facility will occasion and no evidence that they have made efforts to raise any of the necessary resources. There is no evidence of industry interest in or support for the proposed project.	The community has raised some of the funds for the project. The community has a mixed track record of supplying the college with resources for facility construction. Colleges that are in counties or communities with fewer resources have provided some information about the financial shortfall the new facility will occasion and may indicate that they have made efforts to raise some portion of necessary resources. Local industry partners have made some limited commitments to supporting the proposed project.	The community has raised all or nearly all of the funds for the project. The community has a strong track record of supplying the college with resources for facility construction. Colleges that are in counties or communities with fewer resources have provided complete information about the financial shortfall the new facility will occasion and have demonstrated good faith efforts to raise some portion of necessary resources. Local industry partners have made strong commitments to supporting the proposed project.
	Related questions: 1. Has the community raised funds to support the construction of the proposed facility? If so, to what extent would those funds cover the costs of construction? 2. If the community has not already raised funds for the proposed facility, what is the community's track record of fundraising for capital construction for the college? 3. What is the relative economic strength of the community? 4. To what extent have local, regional, or state industries expressed interest in and commitment to the proposed project?	**Examples of evidence:** O Information about bonds, privately raised funds, and other local resources that would be applied toward the proposed project O Historical data about past bond measures and fundraising efforts in the community for capital construction for the college O Data about the economic strength of the community and local/regional businesses that have been or would be targeted to support the facility's construction. O Information about the relative assessed valuation of the college's property	

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Existing Facilities Demonstrate need by providing data about current facilities and specific projections about future needs.	The current level of usage of college facilities is poorly documented, or the current level of usage is documented but indicates that usage is relatively low. The intended purposes of the proposed facility are insufficiently described in the proposal. The proposal does not demonstrate that existing facilities are unsuitable for serving the purposes the new facility would address. The proposal provides little or no evidence about immediacy of need for the new facility. If the proposed facility includes student housing, the proposal does not demonstrate the community lacks sufficient capacity to provide student housing of reasonable price, safety, and quality. The proposal does not include a description of how existing facilities would be repurposed once the proposed facility is built.	The current level of usage of college facilities is documented. Evidence indicates level of use is mixed, or moderate overall. The intended purposes of the proposed facility are described in the proposal, though greater specificity is desired. The proposal demonstrates that existing facilities may not be suitable for serving the purposes the new facility would address. The proposal provides evidence that indicates the immediacy of need for the new facility is not high, but rather moderate. If the proposed facility includes student housing, the proposal includes some information about the capacity of the community to provide student housing. However, the evidence may not allow the Commission to determine with certainty whether the community lacks sufficient housing of reasonable price, safety, and quality. The proposal includes a description of how existing facilities would be repurposed once the proposed facility is built, though the evidence provided may not be sufficiently detailed.	The current level of usage of college facilities is well documented. Usage of existing facilities is high. The intended purposes of the proposed facility are clearly described in the proposal. The quantity of space offered by the proposed facility would be well matched to the proposed uses for the facility. The proposal demonstrates that existing facilities are unsuitable for serving the purposes the new facility would address, either due to insufficient space, time, or physical/technological features. The proposal provides evidence that indicates the immediacy of need for the new facility is high. If the proposed facility includes student housing, the proposal clearly demonstrates the community does not have sufficient capacity to provide student housing of reasonable price, safety, and quality. The proposal includes a description of how existing facilities will be repurposed once the proposed facility is built.
	Related questions: 1. What is the current level of usage of existing facilities at the college? What is the ratio of credit to non-credit use of facilities? What is the ratio of college to non-college use of facilities? 2. What are the intended purposes for the proposed facility? Does the proposed facility offer an appropriate quantity of space for the intended purposes? 3. Why are existing facilities unsuitable for those purposes? 4. What is the immediacy of need for the new facility? 5. If the proposed project includes student housing, has it been established that the community cannot meet the housing needs of the student body? 6. Has the college developed a plan for repurposing existing facilities upon completion of the proposed facility?		**Examples of evidence:** ○ Data from the state database about the capacity and condition of existing facilities ○ Data submitted by the colleges about current facility usage, by credit and non-credit programs ○ Statement about the intended purposes for the proposed facility, including how the size of the facility is well matched to these purposes, and the urgency of said purposes ○ Evidence indicating why existing facilities are unsuitable for the intended purposes might include evidence of insufficient space for certain programmatic activities, lack of available classroom time at reasonable hours, or lack of technological infrastructure ○ For student housing proposals, data from real estate associations or the chamber of commerce about the available housing stock in the surrounding community, compared to the number of students seeking housing. Also, information about the quality, safety, and price of housing in the community that could reasonably be considered for student rental or purchase ○ A plan for how freed space in existing facilities would be used upon construction of the proposed facility

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Safety, ADA Requirements, and Environmental Impact Document compliance, safety, and environmental impact issues that will be addressed by the project.	For proposals submitted for the purpose of eliminating a safety hazard, the nature and extent of that hazard has not been documented in the proposal, or the safety hazard seems to pose little threat. There is no specific need for fulfilling ADA requirements, and no information is given regarding meeting environmental needs.	For proposals submitted for the purpose of eliminating a safety hazard, the nature and extent of that hazard has been documented in the proposal; however, the level of detail is insufficient. The safety hazard poses a threat, though not an imminent one. There are references either to fulfilling ADA requirements or meeting environmental needs, but there is not a clear explanation.	For proposals submitted for the purpose of eliminating a safety hazard, the nature and extent of that hazard has been well documented in the proposal. The safety hazard poses an imminent threat. If applicable, there is a clear description of how the project will satisfy an ADA requirement or how it will minimize environmental impact.
	Related questions: 1. If the proposal seeks funds for renovation or construction on safety grounds, what is the nature and extent of the safety hazard? 2. Does the request satisfy the need for building or retrofitting to meet ADA requirements? In what way(s)?		**Examples of evidence:** ○ Building inspector or fire department reports detailing the nature and extent of the safety hazard ○ A description of the cause of the safety hazard ○ Reports from mold contractors, ADA or environmental impact experts

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Sustainability Provide information about plans to establish and maintain the project, including how it accomplishes energy conservation.	The project is not clearly designed with a future perspective. There is little or no evidence that consideration has been given or that there is a plan to use renewable resources or green technology or that measures will be taken to conserve energy. It is not clear how future operating costs will be handled, how it will affect the college's budget, or that there is any plan for sustainability.	While there is some information provided related to some aspects of sustainability, such as how future operating costs will be handled, there is not as much attention given to other aspects of sustainability, such as the use of renewable resources. It is not clear whether the project could be repurposed if its original purpose is limited.	The project is designed with the future in mind. Consideration has clearly been given to the sustainability of the project, including the use of renewable resources and green technology. In addition, there is a plan for handling future operating costs, and consideration has been given to flexibility of use with details about how the project could be repurposed if it outlives its original purpose.
	Related questions: 1. Does the proposal include a plan for sustainability that is addressed through energy conservation measures or renewable resources? 2. Is there information that suggests the plan has included an assessment of its effects on the environment? 3. Will the project address the state's interest in creating efficient and effective systems? 4. Does the plan address future operating costs and flexibility in the use of the project?		**Examples of evidence:** ○ Energy conservation plan or plan for use of renewable resources or green technology ○ Financial plan for operating costs

APPENDIX B

Interviews and Focus Groups

Focus Groups

2/17/2009	Leadership Team, Eastern Wyoming College
2/17/2009	Student Senate, Eastern Wyoming College
2/17/2009	Board of Trustees, Eastern Wyoming College
2/18/2009	Faculty, Eastern Wyoming College
2/18/2009	Outreach Center Coordinators, Eastern Wyoming College
2/23/2009	Educational Services Staff Council, Laramie County Community College
2/23/2009	Non-traditional Programs Staff, Laramie County Community College
2/23/2009	Students, Laramie County Community College
2/23/2009	Faculty, Laramie County Community College
2/23/2009	Board of Trustees, Laramie County Community College
2/24/2009	Learning Leadership Team, Laramie County Community College
2/24/2009	President's Cabinet, Laramie County Community College
2/25/2009	Albany campus faculty, Laramie County Community College
2/25/2009	Albany campus students, Laramie County Community College
3/2/2009	Students, Central Wyoming College
3/2/2009	Jackson campus faculty and staff, Central Wyoming College
3/2/2009	President and Senior Cabinet, Central Wyoming College
3/3/2009	Faculty, Central Wyoming College
3/3/2009	Board of Trustees, Central Wyoming College
3/3/2009	Strategic Implementation Team, Central Wyoming College
3/3/2009	Outreach Staff, Central Wyoming College
3/3/2009	Student Housing, Activities and Athletics Staff, Central Wyoming College
3/4/2009	Honor Farm administrators and inmates
3/5/2009	Faculty, Northwest College
3/5/2009	President and Senior Cabinet, Northwest College
3/5/2009	Outreach Staff, Northwest College
3/5/2009	Students, Northwest College
3/6/2009	Board of Trustees, Northwest College
3/6/2009	Student Support Program Staff, Northwest College
3/6/2009	Administrative and Support Staff, Northwest College
3/23/2009	Faculty, Western Wyoming College
3/23/2009	Students, Western Wyoming College
3/23/2009	Board of Trustees, Western Wyoming College
3/24/2009	Executive Council, Western Wyoming College
3/24/2009	Outreach Coordinators, Western Wyoming College
3/24/2009	Administrative staff, Western Wyoming College

3/25/2009	Gillette campus, Dean and Administrative Staff
4/14/2009	Faculty, Casper College
4/14/2009	President and Senior Cabinet, Casper College
4/14/2009	Board of Trustees, Casper College
4/14/2009	Student Council, Casper College
4/14/2009	Staff Alliance, Casper College
4/23/2009	Community Stakeholders and Trustees, Sheridan College
4/23/2009	Faculty, Sheridan College
4/23/2009	Students, Sheridan College
4/23/2009	Senior staff, Sheridan College

Group Interviews

3/2/2009	Business and Community Partners, Central Wyoming College
8/11/2009	Wyoming Department of Education Data Systems Staff (Meredith Bickell, Vince Meyer, Geir Solvang, Teri Wigert)
8/18/2009	Wyoming Department of Education Senior Staff (Jim McBride, State Superintendent of Public Instruction; Joe Simpson, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction; Teri Wigert, Director of CTE and TCD Unit Director; Tom Martin, CTE Section Supervisor; Mary Kay Hill, Administration Unit Director)

Individual Interviews

2/18/2009	Tom Armstrong, President, Eastern Wyoming College
2/23/2009	Darrel Hammon, President, Laramie County Community College
2/25/2009	Lynn Stalnaker, Dean, Albany campus of Laramie County Community College
3/23/2009	Karla Leach, President, Western Wyoming College
4/23/2009	Kevin Drumm, President, Sheridan College
3/23/2009	Christine Lustik, Director of Distance Education, Western Wyoming College
3/25/2009	Paul Young, Dean, Gillette campus, Sheridan College District
4/2/2009	Stoney Gaddy, Director of Distance and Distributive Learning, Northern Wyoming Commuity College District
6/1/2009	Rick Miller, Vice President for Governmental, Community and Legal Affairs, University of Wyoming
6/17/2009	Cheryl Heath, Vice President for Administration and CFO, Northern Wyoming Community College District
6/23/2009	Joan Evans, Director, Department of Workforce Services
6/24/2009	Maggie Farrel, Dean of Libraries, University of Wyoming
6/25/2009	Tex Boggs, Former President, Western Wyoming College; former Wyoming State Senator
6/29/2009	Maggi Murdoch, Associate Provost, Associate VP for Academic Affairs, Dean of Outreach School, University of Wyoming
6/30/2009	Rollin Abernathy, Associate Provost, Associate VP for Academic Affairs, University of Wyoming